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If massed American military power backed by global political consensus is not allowed to deal decisively with Saddam Hussein's Iraq, then nothing ever will · *The Editors*

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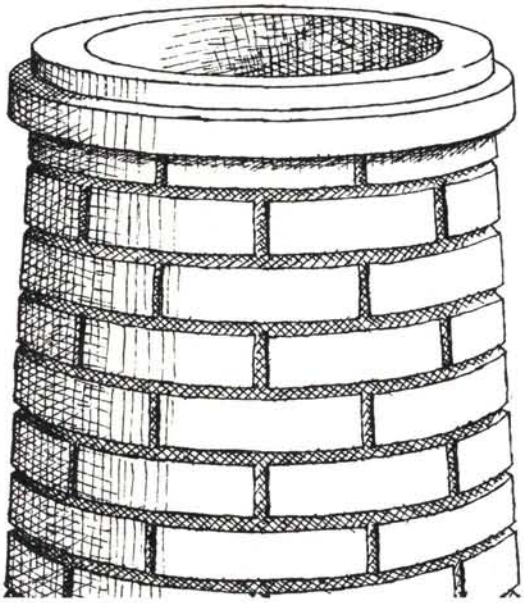

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CORRESPONDENCE

Throwing stones

To the editors:

In "Glass House" (November 5), Douglas Waller attacked several members of Congress, including myself, for criticizing administration policy toward Iraq while (1) not acting quickly enough on Iraqi sanctions legislation within the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and (2) opposing agricultural sanctions on Iraq before the invasion of Kuwait.

Although Congress's record in dealing with U.S. policy toward Iraq was not perfect, Congress was on the right side of the issue. Iraq's verbal attacks against the West, its abysmal human rights record, and its questionable, if not illegal, efforts to acquire technology led many members to call for the imposition of sanctions and a toughening of policy. The administration opposed U.S. sanctions legislation until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Waller neglects to point out that the Committee on Foreign Affairs held open hearings on April 26, July 17, and July 31 in which members raised tough questions about Iraqi policy and sanctions legislation. In addition, several meetings were held to review U.S. policy and refine sanctions legislation with the Departments of State, Commerce, and Agriculture and with the Export-Import Bank. When the committee took up Iraqi sanctions on August 1, sanctions were approved unanimously. Those sanctions were voted out of committee over the administration's objections—at a time when no one realized that an invasion of Kuwait was only hours away. Waller argues that the committee should have acted sooner, but Congress, after all, cannot execute foreign policy.

With respect to Waller's second point, the focus of his attention is on amendments to the House farm bill offered on July 27. Agricultural sanctions were never part of the package of measures under discussion in the Foreign Affairs Committee. The concern of committee members was with the export of military-related material and dual-use items and the aggressive Iraqi efforts to acquire technology illegally. As a result, many members were surprised when a floor amendment proposed a new sanction, not included in the sanctions legislation pending in the committee. I did not view the farm bill as the appropriate vehicle for sanctions against Iraq because the committee was nearing completion of work on sanctions legislation. Our history with unilateral agricultural sanctions, including the agricultural export sanctions against the Soviets in 1979, is not good, and the proposed amendment was unclear in its impact.

LEE H. HAMILTON
Washington, D.C.

The writer, a U.S. representative, is chairman of the House Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East.

Missing link

To the editors:

Perhaps due to my rural Midwestern perspective, I find a pervasive pro-Israeli prejudice in TNR. For example, the editorial "Exit Lebanon" (November 12) concludes: "Hafez Assad's sudden enthusiasm for the U.S. intervention in the Gulf is not derived from some impetuous conversion to the virtues of international law. It's simply his best shot at undoing Syria's most immediate foe. And a useful smoke screen for the brutal dismemberment of a country once theoretically as sovereign as, well, Kuwait." This conclusion might refer to Shamir and Israel rather than to Assad and Syria, yet any relationship between the Israeli presence in Lebanon and the demise of Lebanon isn't even hinted at in the entire editorial. Such an unevenhanded treatment seems inappropriate in a magazine with presumably general readership.

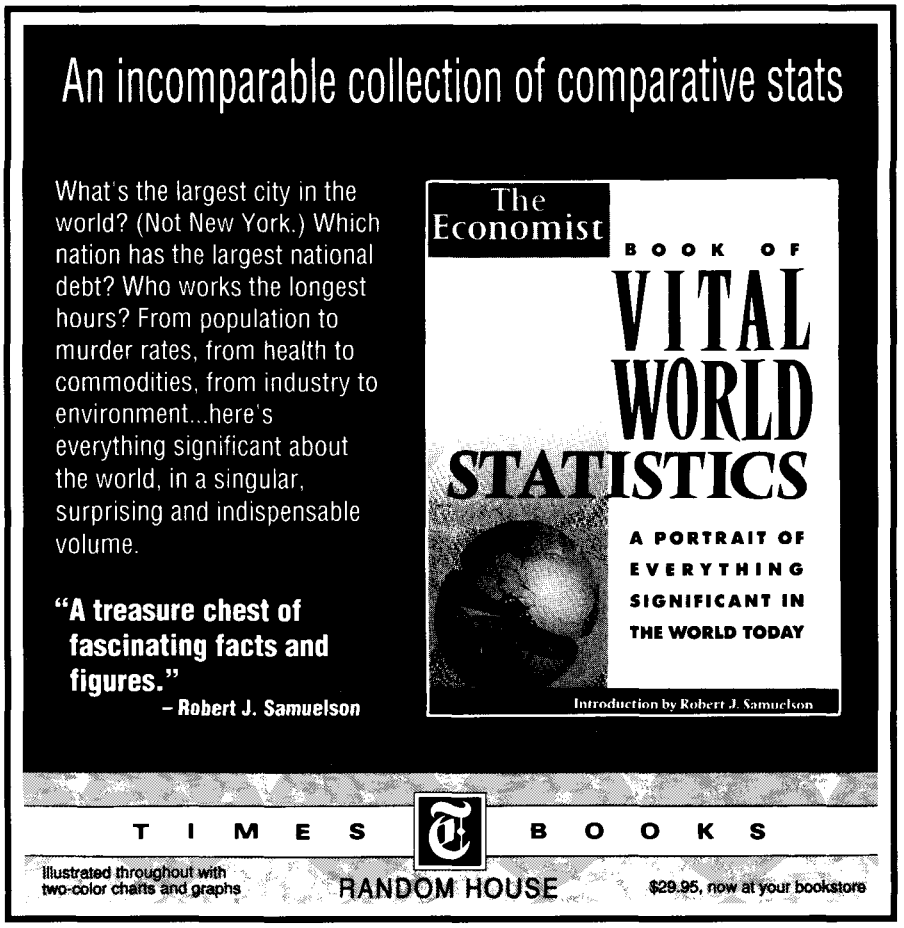
BEN RASMUSEN
Leland, Illinois

Last judgments

To the editors:

In judging past literary and historical figures, Irving Howe should be as generous as he would want future critics to be toward him. Commenting on Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* ("History and the Novel," September 3), Howe objects because Austen's fictional character owns slaves: "Sir Thomas profits from the exploitation of black labor and is nevertheless seen as a morally upright . . . figure."

The reader can fairly infer that Howe believes either that a slaveowner could not have been morally upright or that, without regard for historical circumstances, a clubbable novelist is obliged to portray fictional slaveowners as scoundrels. Surely Howe would concede that a few "exploiters of black labor"—George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Robert E. Lee (whose wife owned slaves)—were morally upright. I doubt that Howe meant that a novelist should never create fictional equivalents of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those Virginians.

Sins to which we are insensitive will be keenly felt by our descendants. Everyone's hope is to be measured by the whole of his work and not solely by the part that has fallen into disrepute.

E. A. FRY
Columbus, Georgia

Victims of Newtspeak

To the editors:

The only possible explanation for your smug dismissal of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 (Notebook, November 12) is that you never read the bill, or that, like a victim of Newtspeak, when you see "civil rights" you immediately think "social welfare for poor, unemployed urban blacks."

For instance, you write that the legislation was a "distraction from the real civil rights issue of the decade—the plight of the black underclass." But the act never claimed to address the underclass exclusively. Indeed, the greatest beneficiaries of the act would have been working women of all races, who still have little power to sue employers for on-the-job sexual harassment and discrimination.

Even uglier, you assume that the vast majority of blacks—the middle-class blacks you occasionally celebrate—no longer deserve the promise of equal rights first made in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. Your ultimate suggestion, however, is the most strange and ironic. You urge supporters of the bill to quit their irrelevant grandstanding in Northwest Washington and instead spend "some time in Southeast." Had your own editorial writers dared to venture past Capitol Hill, they would have discovered something startling: neighborhoods with teachers, civil servants, and secretaries who simply want the same fair shake in the workplace that you guys already have. If anyone has perfected the art of disengaged, irrelevant grandstanding from Northwest Washington, it's TNR.

DANIEL H. PINK
ANTHONY J. SEBOK
New Haven, Connecticut

Bantu scam

To the editors:

Jacob Weisberg's "Shantyland" ("Bophuthatswana Postcard," June 25) is full of inaccuracies. To respond to but a few of the errors:

1. By any reasonable standards, Bophuthatswana is clearly the most economically successful and viable of the four independent "homelands" carved out of the Republic of South Africa. Even those opposed to the homeland concept would concede this fact. Yet Weisberg claims that it is "undoubtedly the most miserable" of the homelands.

2. The article claims the African National Congress is "still banned" in Bophuthatswana. Categorically false—the ANC has *never* been banned there.

3. The article states that 138 children from a school in the village of Thaba Nchu were beaten and held three months by police. The children referred to were not beaten and were released the day after their arrest, with charges withdrawn.

Weisberg has sensationalized isolated incidents, ignored context and fact, and produced a picture that is false and misleading. A balanced portrayal of the country would have discussed its enormous progress over the past decade in housing, roads, schools, health clinics, attraction of industries to provide employment, and supplying water and electricity to remote areas. Weisberg's mean-spirited portrayal is shameful journalism and does a great disservice to your readers.

JAMES L. DENSON
Washington, D.C.
The writer is a lobbyist for Bophuthatswana.

Jacob Weisberg replies:

I'm not sure whom James Denson is trying to fool—the readers of TNR, or his employer, President Lucas Mangope, to whom he indicates a copy of his letter has been sent. When I described Bophuthatswana as "undoubtedly the most miserable" of the homelands, I clearly stipulated "in terms of political repression as well as material misery." In any case, poverty is as severe in Bophuthatswana as in any of the homelands, its "infrastructure" of casinos and sweatshops notwithstanding. The ANC is not allowed to organize or operate in Bophuthatswana. Never been banned? It has never been tolerated. I have photographs taken in Thaba Nchu shortly after the demonstration I wrote about that prove children were beaten. Many were still being held when I visited in April, weeks after they were arrested. Torture and arbitrary detention are common in Bophuthatswana, as the most recent Amnesty International annual report attests. I might also mention that after my article came out, Anthony Mfila, the Operation Hunger relief worker who showed me around, was visited by Bophuthatswana police and interrogated at length. They understood that he had written a critical article for an American magazine. I am told that they were extremely mean-spirited.

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TRB®
FROM WASHINGTON

Sour grapes

Like any good civil libertarian, I was appalled by Burger King's sniveling capitulation to the Rev. Donald Wildmon. Wildmon's group CLeaR-TV threatened a boycott of the company for advertising on TV shows containing "sex, violence, profanity, and anti-Christian bigotry." Within days Burger King ran "An Open Letter To The American People" in newspaper ads, declaring a wish "to go on record as supporting traditional American family values on television."

Like any good liberal, I was rather pleased by the mess the state of Arizona finds itself in after citizens voted against a Martin Luther King holiday. The National Football League immediately moved the 1993 Super Bowl, and other sports and tourism promoters are boycotting the state.

When Dayton-Hudson, the department store chain, canceled its regular contribution to Planned Parenthood because of a boycott threat from right-to-lifers, I was offended. "Shocking—it's corporate cowardice," says Planned Parenthood's Faye Wattleton. When a boycott threat from pro-choicers persuaded Dayton-Hudson to restore the contribution, I cheered. Now the pro-lifers are reigniting *their* boycott.

Commercial boycotts are as American as the Boston Tea Party. But they may be getting out of hand. And they surely are opening up new avenues of hypocrisy for Americans of all political stripes.

The charge of hypocrisy will not stick to Todd Putnam, the Seattle man who publishes *National Boycott News*. His most recent issue contains 200 pages of boycotts—war toys, styrofoam cups, Icelandic cod (over whales), the Soviet Union (over Jews), take your pick. The menu leans to the left. His cover brags of another successful boycott against Burger King; this one concerned the use of beef from Latin American rain forests. But Mr. Putnam says that he welcomes boycotts of all sorts as exercises of citizenship in the age of corporations.

"It's a real boom time for boycotts," he says happily, crediting publicized successes such as the tuna canners' agreement to stop killing dolphins. And yet, "I meet people every day who don't even know there's a new grape boycott and a new Nestle's boycott going on." Thus *National Boycott News*. Although the emphasis is on organized boycotts, subscribers are invited to "tell us your personal boycotts," which will be published as a service to "those of our readers who feel they are *not boycotting enough*" (italics his).

Is America not boycotting enough? Or is it boycotting too much? On the one hand, it's good for society to have an active citizenry and good for individuals to live by their values. Social and political concerns ought to be a part of daily life, not just prejudices to cart into the voting booth every other year (if that). On the other hand, politicizing every economic decision down to which brand of cereal to buy can gum up the gears of commerce, poison social relations, reduce toleration, and generally strain the national sense of humor.

Boycotters say it's simply a matter of consumer freedom. "There is a constitutional right for a citizen to buy from whomever they want," says John Willke of the National Right to Life Committee (incorrectly and ungrammatically, but you get the point). Tyrone Crider, head of PUSH, the black group running a boycott against Nike sports gear, says, "We're simply using our legitimate consumer right not to do business with companies that do not do business with us."

But when boycotts work, it's usually not from actual lost sales to the boycotters themselves. It's from a generalized corporate fear of controversy. The cravenness of corporations is hilarious. *National Boycott News* reproduces some letters from boycott targets. The chairman of AT&T, for example, responding to a boycott of defense manufacturers, pleads that "it's really stretching definitions" to accuse the company of doing defense work. He makes no effort to assert the social usefulness of helping the nation defend itself. That's typical. Boycotts are a powerful tool in the hands of a noisy minority. For that reason—and to save our sanity—a few rules are needed to sort out the fair boycotts from the unfair ones. Here are some suggestions.

Rule 1. Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. You can't condemn the other side for using the same tactic you use yourself. The left pioneered the modern boycott era with grapes and Coors beer two decades ago. Now the right has caught on. Fair enough.

Rule 2. Don't use a boycott to deny

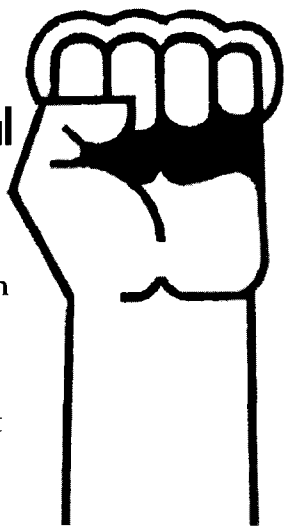
continued on page 45

How images of Israel avenging Auschwitz play out in politics and culture.

TOUGH JEWS

Political Fantasies and the Moral Dilemma of American Jewry

PAUL BREINES



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 10, 1990

TOUGH DUTY

A striking feature of this fall's election season was how little the congressional Democrats had to say about the American military presence in the Persian Gulf. The focus groups put together by their consultants must have told them that there were few votes to be won from criticizing the Bush administration on that issue. But now, with the electoral shoals safely navigated, many of these same Democrats—and some Republicans, too—seem increasingly agitated over a policy they had previously supported in degrees ranging from passive assent to enthusiastic endorsement.

President Bush, displaying his own phobia of the people, chose to wait until two days after the election to announce that he was sending an additional 200,000 troops to the Gulf. Yet the new deployment did not in any meaningful sense represent a new policy. Meanwhile Iraq has continued to ravage Kuwait and the Kuwaitis with unforgiving brutality, bolstering Baghdad's hold on the political imagination of the region and consolidating its dominion of fear.

After almost four months of sanctions we don't know with any certainty how deeply they're biting. But we do know that sanctions don't impress the Arabs on either side, who see Saddam Hussein as having reduced the great powers to dithering. Now, there are those in the West who'd gladly forfeit feeble Kuwait to the aggressor rather than have to fight his armies. But George Bush apparently is not among them. In fact, he has rather encumbered his policy by binding it more or less exclusively to the goal of freeing Kuwait. This goal, however just, may not by itself clearly warrant the mobilization that Washington has organized. No, the real reason there needs to be a war against Iraq is that Baghdad will otherwise soon add to its biological stockpiles and its chemical arsenal (which it has already used several times) a functioning nuclear capacity that will give frighteningly new meaning to the concept of the balance of terror. (Skeptics should read Malcolm W. Browne's careful account of Iraq's atomic undertakings in the November 18 *New York Times*.)

Even those Democrats made most nervous by the deployments to Saudi Arabia find this prospect unsettling. A few of them suggest that maybe Saddam Hussein, reasonable fellow that he must be under his ruthless exterior, would consent to retrenching Iraq's drive for regional mastery in unconventional weapons. To proffer that hope as analysis, whether from cynicism or naïveté, is reckless. And it's not surprising that such recklessness has now been taken up by the politicized Catholic and (especially) Protestant clergy, ever eager to persuade that force, especially American force, is never needed in world affairs. Still, no one really serious thinks that this regime would abjure precisely what has given it inordinate sway in Arab politics. Baghdad's power to destroy will have to be destroyed. At least the momentum of the administration's policy is toward putting an end to Iraq's ability to rain mass death on its neighbors and beyond. Nothing else will.

These are the stakes that almost no one in Washington feels comfortable discussing. It's easier to talk about whether the president should or should not ask Congress for a declaration of war. That is an important procedural and constitutional question, of course. But it is also a safe place to hide from harder, scarier questions—such as what it will actually take to rid the world of the awful threat of a regime with the ambitions, scruples, and and arsenals, actual and potential, of Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

No doubt Mr. Bush worries that debate in Washington will be seen in Baghdad as irresolution; but it is not only on account of his zeal at preserving the executive's prerogatives against an encroaching Congress that the president has been reluctant to expand public discussion of the true aims of a war against Iraq. Mr. Bush and his lieutenants have not yet acknowledged, certainly not to the public and perhaps not even to themselves, that their appeasement of the Iraqi tyranny was a disaster. If the Soviets were the intimate advisers to Saddam Hussein's armed forces, Western governments, the U.S. government included, were its underwriters. Without Western credits and critical matériel Iraq would not now pose the peril it does. So at least to that extent we are culpable. Were the administration to focus on Iraq's nuclear designs the public might begin to grasp how a nineteenth-century society had been able to muster twenty-first-century armaments. Much easier to treat this entire

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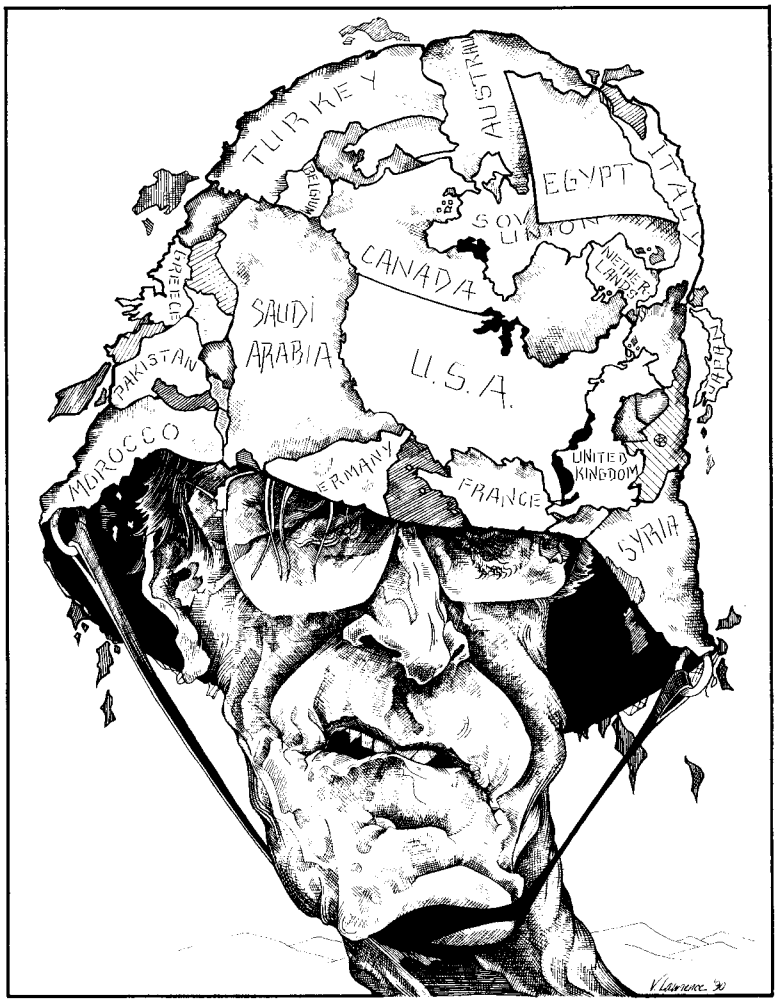
episode as an old-fashioned case of territorial aggression. Or to treat it as a sort of bread-and-butter issue, as did the secretary of state on one of his periodic descents from Olympus. "To bring it down to the average American citizen," James Baker said memorably on November 13, "let me say that means jobs. If you want to sum it up in one word, it's jobs."

Mr. Baker's own job since August 2 has been to exhort foreign leaders to support the U.S. government in its new stance of hostility toward the rapacious dictatorship it backed until . . . well, until August 2. The international consensus Messrs. Baker and Bush have built is a considerable accomplishment, which has made possible the imposition of unusually airtight economic sanctions. But this same consensus could turn out to be the undoing of the policy: a process that validates can, after all, also impede. The drive for unanimity in the United Nations Security Council makes us hostage to irrelevant actors. A few days ago the secretary of state triumphantly got Colonel Mengistu's regime in Ethiopia to acquiesce to our will in the Security Council. Then it was the foreign minister of Zaire. The prices were not reported.



GEORGE BUSH BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

This is the kind of work Mr. Baker is good at and likes. His specialty is bringing the Soviets along. This involves an elaborate, oft-repeated ballet that usually begins in Moscow, where a high Soviet official, say Mikhail Gorbachev himself, will utter something that distances the Soviet Union from American policy. Then Mr. Baker seeks out Eduard Shevardnadze, who, it is reported, is saying something more stalwart. Foggy Bottom sighs its relief. Then comes another Soviet fade, in the latest instance Mr. Gorbachev's elaborate refusal, at the Paris meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, to agree to a U.N. resolution authorizing force. Instead Mr. Gorbachev counseled patience, as if the Persian Gulf were a Moscow food queue. The cold war is over (Mr. Bush and Mr. Gorbachev were in Paris to make it official); but the Soviet Union is almost over, too. Politically, the Kremlin is a ghost town. Such influence as it has in the Gulf crisis is a function of the Bush-Baker strategy of seeking prior Security Council certification for every move the United States makes. The resulting inflation of the importance of Soviet acquiescence is a political absurdity—just as it is a moral absurdity to have to seek the approval, at who knows what price, of the rulers of Communist (still) China.

The Democrats and the foreigners who've threatened to drop off the administration's Iraq bandwagon say they're doing so because the increasing numbers of American troops materially changes the situation in the Gulf. They are right in that this additional deployment enhances the ability of the allies to win a war if a war is fought, and to win a war with smaller allied losses. But they are wrong to act as if the new move is some sort of great surprise. From the beginning the president has kept open the option of offensive action against Iraq. In any case if we entertained the prospect of war, and no one can say we hadn't all along, it would be criminally unwise not to put in place a big enough force to win and to reduce casualties. Within a short time that's exactly the kind of numbers we will have.

With the additional troops now on their way to the Gulf, the United States will have in place against Iraq a force at least as large as was deployed for the Normandy invasion in 1944 and just about the number that, at the height of the cold war, faced the Soviet bloc in Europe. Even without the manpower contributions of the curious (and, we suspect, ultimately unreliable) international posse put together by the administration behind American policy in the region, there are more armed men and women ready to fight the Iraqi military than, to take a salient example, Israel can muster against all Arab armies combined. (The United States also has roughly 1,000 fighter craft, as opposed to Israel's 650-odd jets.) Washington never doubts that Israel would be the winner even if obliged to fight on all its fronts and against each of its enemies together. This is to say that what the United States has massed in the Gulf is not a force that will lose.

Maybe Saddam Hussein understands that, and will in

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consequence make a sufficient number of pre-emptive concessions on Kuwait—keeping only some of the oil fields and just two islands, instead of the whole country—as to prove irresistible to the allies hoping to avert a war. If that happens the world will only have delayed its encounter with Iraq to a later time, when Baghdad's capacity to terrorize will be only more palpable and more paralyzing. It wouldn't be the first time that shortsighted politicians postponed the deluge; that's what happened, if the analogy may be permitted, with Hitler. But we doubt that the dictator of Iraq will offer much help to those who wish to be deluded. He will, in the end, not concede quite enough even to tempt the most craven of his adversaries. He is too ravenous. In the meantime, he is dispatching another 250,000 soldiers to the front.

We don't mean to personalize this conflict. The Baath regime of Saddam Hussein is an expression of the political culture of Iraq; the distinctive aggression against Kuwait is an expression of deep resentments in an Arab body politic that has never found a way to channel resentments into realistic hopes and reasonable programs. That is why any conceivable diplomatic solution acceptable to Baghdad would be a calamity—because it would validate and encourage phantasmagoric aspirations and murderous demarches. The price of this particular calamity would be paid largely by Arabs who already have suffered enough from their inability either to modernize or to democratize. But others would also ultimately pay a high price, measured in the inability of the civilized powers to protect smaller states and endangered peoples from aggressors. We don't see this the way Robert W. Tucker does (see "Why War?" page 22): as an argument for preserving prestige through the war option. It is an argument for preserving the police power through the war option. In that sense a failure to use the force we have mustered to accomplish attainable ends would have long-range and altogether unacceptable consequences. No aggressor would be deflected from aggression; no victim would think American help plausible. This would mean a rude end to the barely one-year-old tenure of the United States as the world's only true superpower.

We do not pretend to the kind of military expertise that would permit us confidently to counsel one war strategy over another. But the germane dispute, we suspect, may be less over war strategies per se than over war aims. Still, there is no denying the pivotal military meaning of so many armed forces in one place. If war comes they will fight, even if war comes primarily in the skies. And the skies do seem to us to be the appropriate venue for the war aims it is reasonable for the United States and its allies to have. Our targets should be the infrastructure of Iraq's present and future military might: its airfields, missile bases, nuclear and chemical plants, ammunition warehouses, control towers, power stations, supply lines, etc. Sustained bombing of these objectives would inevitably loosen Baghdad's grasp on Kuwait and finally free it from the Iraqi occupation. Most important, Iraq would no longer be the dominant power in the neighborhood; with selective embargoes by the allies Iraq need never be able to threaten anyone again. That would be accomplishment enough for any venture, however ambitious. It is nonetheless a limited goal, more limited certainly than the ones that official and unofficial Washington is now imagining may be possible without the use of force but with a long-term American presence in the area. Fail at something relatively simple, these folk seem to be saying by way of advance consolation, and succeed at something more difficult.

How ironic that many of those who believe that American power is so diminished that it is unlikely that we would prevail in a test of arms against Iraq turn around and exaggerate our ability to create the equivalent of a U.S. imperium among the Arabs. In the current *New York Review of Books*, for example, George Ball tries to plead at once abysmal American weakness and limitless American influence. And there has been reasserted in the administration an old-time hankering for a permanent American ascendancy in the Middle East. To scholars and specialists this particular yen evokes the failed and foiled dreams of John Foster Dulles, who actually contrived an alliance with our Arab friends based on the NATO paradigm. This was folly then; it is folly now. It will bring more turmoil to the area, not less—political turmoil and cultural turmoil, too. Whatever the frightened Arab monarchs say now about wanting U.S. protection, their populaces would be easily enraged against a standing American involvement in their lives. The monarchs are not, it has to be remembered, the democratically sanctioned leaders of nation-states. Even the undoing of Iraq as a danger to its neighbors wouldn't change the illogical logic of the other Arab countries. That is a matter for longer term factors to effect, and intrinsic factors that remain almost indiscernible now. About that there is nothing we can do, either alone or in tandem.

What we can do is put an end to Iraq's murderous hold on others. But we can do it only by war—a carefully calibrated war, to be sure, avoiding civilian targets and eschewing excess. Just wars have been fought for less.

NOTEBOOK

WHITE MISCHIEF: One reason Harvey Gantt lost the North Carolina Senate race to Jesse Helms is that the Helms campaign made a last-minute issue of Mr. Gantt's huge profit from a broadcasting deal, seemingly the result of reverse discrimination. Mr. Gantt was part of a minority investor group that acquired a television license from the FCC and sold it a few weeks later to a white media company. Mr. Gantt put up just $680; his share of the sale proceeds was $470,000. Mr. Gantt's investor group was the only applicant for the license—the product of the merger of several competing applicants and the buyout of several others—so technically the FCC never favored Mr. Gantt because of his race, since it had no choice in the matter. In reality, though, minority status is part or all of one's bargaining leverage

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in such a deal. Why would the white media company have paid $470,000 for Gantt's share if it could have gotten the same thing for $680? Of all forms of affirmative action, these FCC giveaways are the most indefensible. The beneficiaries fall in two categories: either they're already wealthy or they are just fronting for white businessmen. In either case, they hardly warrant society's special concern. Among the other prominent political figures who have benefited from the FCC's minority preferences are Democratic national chairman Ron Brown and New York Mayor David Dinkins. The idea that either man needed special help to break into a white-dominated business world is ludicrous. Another irony is that affirmative action for the rich—these FCC rules, construction contract set-asides, subsidized loans from the Small Business Administration, and so on—are often favored and exploited by Republicans who rail self-righteously against affirmative action to benefit lesser souls. The conservative-dominated Supreme Court upheld the FCC rules last year. In fact—as reported by Thomas Edsall in *The Washington Post*—two key campaign advisers to Jesse Helms were involved in helping a couple of Hispanic women acquire a Raleigh, North Carolina, FM radio station, using the FCC's minority preference rules, at the very time of the Gantt deal.

MILLI VANILLI AWARD: Record promoters have never been held up as ethical models. Payola and all that. Yet what shocks the conscience of the rock 'n' roll industry is s.o.p. in the politics-and-journalism industry. The same week two pop stars were stripped of their Grammys for lip-synching their hit album, *Newsweek* ran what it claimed was an essay "by President Bush," outlining his case for Gulf intervention. Accompanying the article was a staged photograph purporting to show the president in the Oval Office, sweating over the final draft. In fact, Mr. Bush looked as if he were reading it for the first time, which was probably the case. If he did actually read it, he put in more work than 90 percent of the senators who routinely send ghostwritten op-ed pieces, tracts, and speeches out under their names. Now, if the White House could only find someone a bit more convincing to lip-synch this material on the road . . .

UNRESTRAINED BEHAVIOR: The specter of censorship is raised so often and so casually that it becomes difficult not to tune it out. The case of the CNN and Noriega tapes, however, is the real thing. By failing to overturn a lower court's decision to bar the network from broadcasting the recordings, the Supreme Court has poked a hole in the First Amendment. Several of the same justices who found insufficient grounds to stop publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1971—when thousands of American lives were at stake, according to the Nixon administration—had no trouble making an exception for something they *really* value: the lawyer-client privilege. So now there's a precedent for judges to stop in advance the publication of any material that imperils a defendant's right to a fair trial. The hole could quickly expand to a chasm. U.S. District Judge William M. Hoeveler's restraining order expires in a few days. If he issues another, let us hope that the Supreme Court comes to its senses and rules in favor of CNN. But CNN, it should be noted, is far from blameless in the matter. It originally held back from broadcasting the tapes to extend the life of its scoop for a few extra days. Then, after the restraining order was issued, it tried to milk maximum publicity by playing excerpts from them. The network would have done itself credit by pursuing its legal case without playing tapes that the government should never have made in the first place. After all, the First Amendment doesn't say you have to publish. Just that you should have the right.

BACK TO THE FIFTIES: In *The Cause That Failed: Communism in American Political Life*, the historian Guenter Lewy describes the efforts of Norman Cousins, the longtime editor of the *Saturday Review*, and others to prevent the infiltration of the anti-nuclear group SANE by Communists. In 1958, according to the book, Mr. Cousins asked the FBI if it could supply him with a list of subversives who might be trying to join the organization. In his review of the book ("The Great Seduction," TNR, October 15), Irving Howe reported that Mr. Cousins "flatly denied, in a telephone conversation, that he ever contacted the FBI about the internal life of SANE. Where this leaves Lewy as historian I cannot say." According to FBI documents made public under the Freedom of Information Act, it leaves Lewy unblemished. A memorandum dated July 30, 1958, describes the request in detail. "Mr. COUSINS wanted to know if it would be possible . . . for this Bureau to furnish his organization with the names of any subversives who might be attempting to infiltrate any one of the committees in New York or other cities. . . . Mr. COUSINS indicated that he recognized the committee was a 'natural' for attempts at infiltration by subversive individuals or organizations and that he felt so strongly about the aims of the committee itself he did not wish to see it hampered by its being used by any individual who did not have the best interests of the United States at heart." Somewhat surprisingly, the FBI told Mr. Cousins it was legally prohibited from helping him by supplying information. This evidence seems conclusive. After we read the memo to him over the phone, Mr. Cousins softened the stance he had taken with Mr. Howe. He said he did not remember the discussion, and doubts that he would have initiated a call to the FBI on the subject. But given the context of the times and his desire to protect SANE, he didn't find it implausible. Historian acquitted. Case dismissed.

FOLLOW-UPS: Patrick Gardner, the student journalist who asked Dan Quayle why he was so popular with young people (see "Washington Diarist," November

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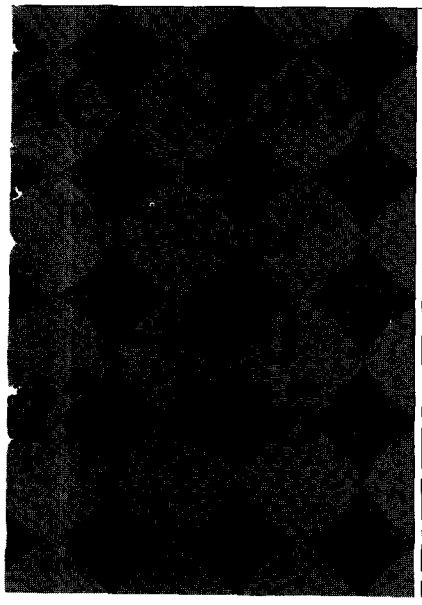

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26), now works as a speechwriter in the vice president's office. Will Davenport, who thinks middle-aged Americans should not be disqualified from serving their country in the Gulf (see TRB, "Uncle Sam Doesn't Want You," also November 26), has announced the official formation of the Woodstock Brigade. Anyone interested should write to him at Box 37, 2120 Crestmoor Road, Nashville, Tennessee 37215. Please state your age, health, and prior military service, if any.

HOLIDAY GIVING: Christmas is a time to think of others, and each December *The American Spectator* asks an array of politicos which books they'd recommend as yuletide offerings. This year Nancy Reagan got her chance. Her top two choices: "The fascinating story of a young boy from Dixon, Illinois," called *An American Life*, by Ronald Reagan, and "an honest book answering all the charges that had been made against her for eight years," called *My Turn*, by Nancy Reagan. That's the spirit, Nancy.

OUR CHOICE: We are pleased to announce the publication of Steven W. Mosher's *China Misperceived: American Illusions and Chinese Reality* (A New Republic Book/ Basic Books). American perceptions of China, Mr. Mosher explains, have always been radically unstable, shifting between positive images and dark portraits. His aim is "to trace this larger cycle of hostility-admiration-disenchantment-benevolence" by examining the varieties of American commentary on China—the work of academic China-watchers, foreign policy experts, politicians, and journalists. Everywhere Mr. Mosher discovers distortions, alternately wishful and fearful, and he counsels that clearer vision will now come from the Chinese who dare to speak. •

The market's nonexistent slump.

ART APPRECIATION

By E. V. Thaw

Public art auctions have become a favorite spectator sport not just of devotees of conspicuous consumption, but of the financial press as well. Avidly following the fortunes (especially the bad fortunes) of the art market, reporters read sweeping significance into the scores of the highest-profile auctions, in particular the sales of Impressionist and Modern art. Though those auctions represent only a corner of the whole art market, it's there that the escalation of prices has been most dizzying. The unthinkable $10 million for a painting (Turner) in 1984 quickly evaporated into the $40 million for a van Gogh in 1987, then $54 million (on credit, as we learned subsequently) later that year, and finally, last spring, $76 million and $82 million on successive evenings for Renoir and, again, van Gogh.

The most recent spectacle, a whole week of auctions held by Christie's and Sotheby's, took place in mid-November and was greeted at first as a failure. The disappointment, according to the press, was the opening event, Henry Ford's estate sale. It's a comment on just how skewed expectations have become that a sale of third-rate Impressionists is judged weak because it brought in only $30 million, rather than the $56 million that Sotheby's had guaranteed to the consignor. Or that more than $18 million for a quite fine but somewhat stiff Victorian Renoir is considered unremarkable. In fact, the high percentage of unsold paintings was perfectly explicable: the paintings were of low quality, the estimates were inflated, and most art market professionals knew that Sotheby's had foolishly given an iron-clad guarantee on the whole sale.

In any case, later in the week the prices improved in subsequent auctions of Impressionist paintings, drawings, and watercolors, and the art market depression was suddenly declared over. For those who are confused by the erratic diagnoses of the press and curious about the true health of this market, it's important to know a little about how the art auction system now operates.

To start with, today's art auctions are not free auctions in the old sense, but clever merchandising schemes. On every lot there are high-retail reserves—paintings that are returned to their consignor if they don't sell for a declared price—and paintings estimated at values that, in many cases, are simply wishful (and often wish-fulfilling) fantasies. How are these estimates determined? The answer is crucial, since assessments of the state of the art market are based on whether these presale estimates are achieved.

Mr. X, a shipowner, wants to sell his twelve Impressionists. Sotheby's sends its team of young experts from the painting department. Christie's does the same. Each prepares a proposed list of estimates, and each bases those figures on the highest prices that similar works have already fetched. None of the hard working appraisers at Sotheby's and Christie's risks his own money on his value judgments as does an art dealer. None of them is an art historian or a critic who judges the historic worth of art. They rely on their price computers, which can instantly recall what, say, a Renoir of a particular size and date has sold for in London, Tokyo, Zurich, or Paris. Even though no two works of art are the same, a machine is all they need, because ever since the mid-1980s it has been a fixed rule that the next similar Renoir would sell for more than the last. Quality, condition, and previous bidding

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aberrations are simply not factored in.

In addition, each auction house knows the other is competing, so both sides tend to inflate their promises to the shipowner in order to convince the consignor to entrust his collection to them. Recently the bitter rivalry between the two auction houses has led to the reckless practice of offering firm guarantees to the consignor: Christie's and Sotheby's often contract to pay the owner agreed upon minimum prices whether or not the paintings in fact sell at those prices. Thus the auction house becomes the real seller, a clear conflict of interest, since they often advise the buyers.

For a number of years now, both auction houses have done a very enterprising job of merchandising art throughout the world. All significant paintings and objects go on tour to major cities before an auction, and each house sends out a glossy advance brochure to 50,000 or more affluent buyers from Japan to São Paulo. The auctions have stressed the financial aspects of art possession, claiming investment status for it, proving over and over again its current liquidity. The auctions have certainly attracted many new collectors to the fray, a healthy and even admirable development. Who can complain about the movement of substantial excess wealth into art rather than other things one can think of? When that happened in the past, in the age of Mellon, Morgan, and Frick, the general public was the ultimate beneficiary.

But the auction houses couldn't stop at a job well done. Guarantees, credit, and loans against artworks have always been risky, and they are an incentive to distort values. This unevenness in the recent sales—the failures and the successes—should encourage a new discipline in the houses. In any case, after a week that saw the Henry Ford Renoir sell for $18.2 million, a great Constable landscape bring $21 million in London, and a fine pen and ink drawing by van Gogh fetch $8.4 million, announcements of the death of the art market are greatly exaggerated. •

Michael Heseltine, Thatcher's nemesis.

TARZAN TORY

By Edward Pearce

For eighty yards the committee room corridor of the House of Commons gave the phrase "wall-to-wall" new resonance. Avid journalists jostled with cruel-natured Labour deputies on November 20 to hear the result of the Tory Party leadership contest announced. A squeaky voice at the bottom of the corridor proclaimed: "Thatcher 204, Heseltine 152, abstentions 6." The gilded, rich, left-of-center Michael Heseltine had brutally dented the Iron Lady. Next Tuesday, in a second ballot, he will try to turn her into scrap metal.

The best-known story about the 57-year-old Heseltine is that as an Oxford undergraduate in 1952 he ruled lines on an envelope to mark the coming decades of the century and his career; at 1990 he wrote "Downing Street." Such singularity of purpose is not considered good form even in places less given to restraint than Britain. Little about Heseltine's character *is* British, which in fact places him in a rich line of prime ministers of Britain—Benjamin Disraeli, Lloyd George, Margaret Thatcher—who have little or nothing in common with it.

Heseltine was born in Wales, in the failed seaport of Swansea, but he is hardly redolent of the working-class romance, lyrical eloquence, or charm that is stereotypically applied to the place. He has been in his day pointedly theatrical, a characteristic excusable in British actors but somewhat frowned upon in politicians. He has even invited the word "wild," the tabloids long since nicknaming him Tarzan. His hair has something to do with it. Blond aspiring to chestnut, it was once cut just short of the shoulders, and flew about unrestrained in his more energetic rhetorical bursts. It has lately calmed down a touch, sustained in handsome horns by quantities of lacquer at the salon of George F. Trumper, the Piccadilly barber to what's left of the British aristocracy.

Most of Heseltine's actual feats of wildness, however, have had the confected, staged look of Mr. Trumper's liquid fix. In 1978, after Labour parliamentary whips had finagled a tight vote in the Commons, Heseltine seized the mace, emblem of parliamentary sovereignty, and brandished it over his head like a golf trophy to suggest what Labourites had done for democracy. It was intended to be a flashy gesture and was taken to be a flashy gesture, despite much Tory huffing about the young fellow's unsoundness. (Heseltine can thank his stars the Commons was not yet on television in those days, so there can now be no deadly video replay.)

Early in his career the young Heseltine, known at Oxford as Von Heseltine for his Aryan blond looks, decided to make some money. Small legacies were turned into a house in London's socially ambiguous Notting Hill. He ran it as a boarding house, and mixed margarine with the butter in the dining room, the only charge ever made against his business rectitude. He doubled his money when he sold the place. With the proceeds he bought a run-down hotel, and once again made a profit of 100 percent.

Publishing, to which he turned next, once almost ruined him, but today his Haymarket Press has sixty-three titles, including such excellent publications as *Management Today* and the advertising industry's weekly *Campaign*, and is worth close to $200 million. His own worth is assessed at half that. Indeed, Heseltine is one of the few Englishmen who would be rich enough to make it in American politics. His money keeps him in a

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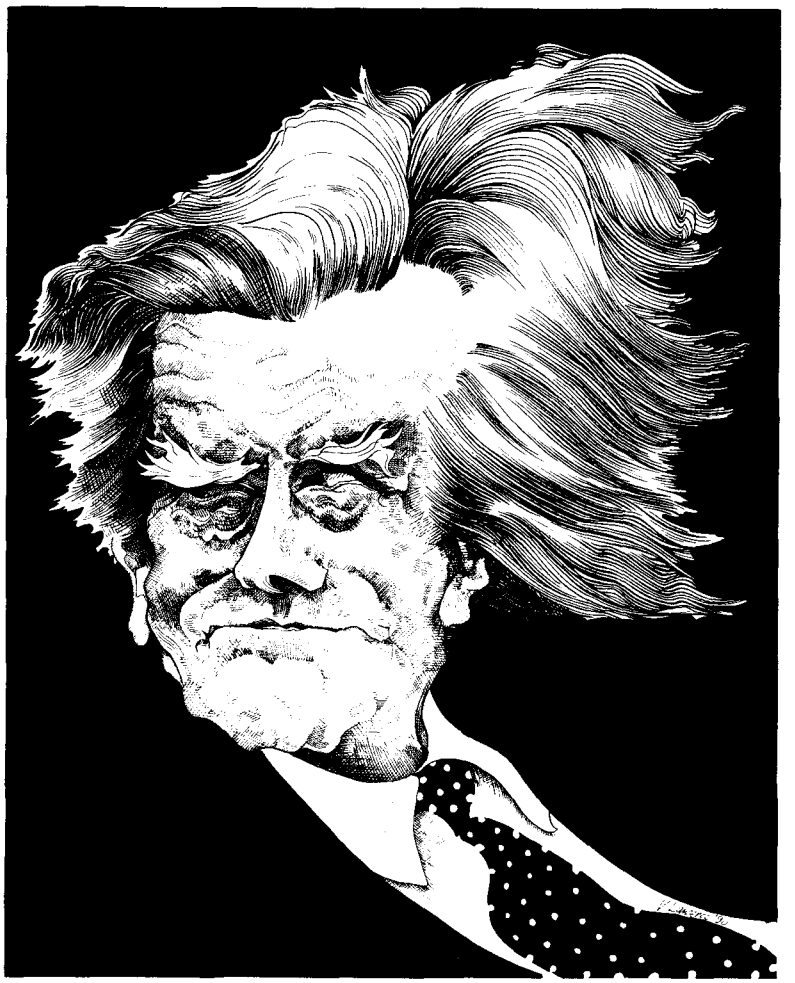
townhouse, a holiday place in Devon, and an Oxfordshire manor in which, a fanatical gardener, he landscapes with a bulldozer.

Interestingly, in areas where he has excelled, he lacks deference. Impressively dismissive of the money-making talent, he is without reverence for businessmen. An almost archetypal Thatcherite entrepreneurial success story, he has made his later career as an anti-Thatcherite. And as a former defense minister, he is said to be remarkably cool about the military top brass, unlike Thatcher, who goes rigid in her devotion.

An ironic perception of soldiers, however, did not stop him from dressing up as one. He appeared in a flak jacket in a dawn raid on the radical ladies of Greenham Common. This is the place in Berkshire, seventy miles west of London, where we put U.S. missiles to keep the Russians out. The British anti-war movement, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, sent a bunch of women to camp, snip wire, and make bloody nuisances of themselves, but as a threat to our national security, they had all the menace of peanut brittle.



MICHAEL HESELTINE BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Incidentally, Heseltine, with characteristic overkill, had ordered the arming of Greenham guards with pistols (the absence of side arms is one of the true glories of Britain). A woman in the ministry (Sarah Tisdall) told *The Guardian* newspaper. Thatcher and Heseltine, sharing a righteous froth, reacted as if they had found a suitcase nuke in Charing Cross Road. After a trial poor Sarah was sent to prison for six months, as nasty and illiberal a little episode as one recalls.

Although Heseltine has made a great to-do about his patriotism, the need for super-jumbo defense spending, the gallantry of our lads, and other poetical brickdust, the possibility lingers that he may not believe a word of it. While Margaret Thatcher believes embarrassingly in the entirety of her feverish, clutched bundle of certainties—the glories of Winston Churchill, the fecklessness of the working class, and the moral rightness of money—Heseltine sees only slogans, photo opportunities, and large, adoring, foolish audiences capable of seduction. His ebullient sexual charm and near-manic pandering to every craven conservative constituency led someone to observe sourly during one of his Conservative conference tirades, "That man has found the party's clitoris."

Occasionally this cynicism becomes too obvious. On the fortieth anniversary of the Second World War, I heard him orate to the Tory Conference over the dead of the Ardeche, an encounter then receiving saturation reminiscence. He dropped head onto chest, and orated solemnly through his nostrils, deftly turning the dead to useful political account. A Cabinet colleague was spotted behind a pillar doubled up with laughter.

Until quite recently such cool skepticism about our boy would have marked majority Tory opinion. But ironically enough, Heseltine is the beneficiary of Thatcher's ever more manic style of government. This is no place to pursue details of the 1986 Westland affair, an argument about $20 million worth of helicopters, which is the last occasion that Thatcher's government nearly came unstuck. Thatcher and Heseltine disagreed over whether the ailing British company should be taken over by an American corporation, as the market and Thatcher demanded, or by a European concern, as Heseltine wanted. But in the late stages of the row, Heseltine did what no one does: faced with losing another battle to Thatcher, he walked out of the Cabinet into the street. This was seen as a suspended declaration of war. Two weeks ago it was finally activated.

He gets his ripe revenge now. For four years, in the guise of loyal dogwork, he belabored the map of Britain. He spoke for the party and passed the rubber chicken test from Southampton to Inverness. Consequently his profile is more sharply etched than that of any Cabinet member.

He also brings a thought-out program, all of it calculated, by no means all of it insincere. Like Geoffrey Howe he favors the European monetary integration

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Thatcher loathes; he promises to make war on the poll tax, Thatcher's piece of fiscal self-immolation; and he is willing in principle to spend public money on saving some companies and jobs. This is the Tory left speaking, and, insofar as he can belong anywhere sincerely, Heseltine belongs there. The jingoist patriotism is largely an act, something turned on to keep the party groundlings happy. But dislike of neglecting poverty, though useful grist to his mill, is not faked. Neither is his streak of environmentalism, although he has shamelessly exploited the electoral unpopularity of overbuilding in the cramped prettiness of southern England.

Heseltine wraps a bundle of liberal opinions in a fascist manner and says, "Give me a balcony and I will rule the suburbs." By such mock heroics he expresses a formidable contempt for great tracts of the Tory Party, and is the antithesis of Thatcher. She represented coercive certainty. Friends are inadequate allies, opponents enemies, colleagues wimps blurring into traitors, and the European Community a foreign conspiracy against Britain. For all the flashiness and the consuming desire to win, Heseltine represents old-fashioned genial cynicism, with a dash of social conscience. It may not be enough, it may be careerism set in rhinestones, but it is certainly a change. And the need for a change, after eleven years of the Iron Lady, is what finally proved her undoing.

EDWARD PEARCE is a columnist for *The Guardian* of London.

Jobs for the rich and well connected.

INTERN HELL

By David Greenberg

In the early 1960s, in the wake of John F. Kennedy's ask-not calls to public service, a few Capitol Hill staffers put together the congressional intern program. The intent was to find work for socially conscious young people from every kind of background, who would come to D.C. to change the world. It hasn't worked out that way. These days an internship is an essential first step toward getting a real job on the Hill, and it is open exclusively to the rich.

Members of Congress usually choose five to ten interns to work during the year and upward of twenty for the more popular summer jobs. Applicants, mostly college sophomores and juniors, typically come from the home state or district. Interns learn to file, fax, and photocopy, and, in some offices, take notes at committee hearings and conduct research for legislation.

The socioeconomic weeding out operates at various levels. First stop is political favoritism. Most offices dole out a number of internships to children of contributors to the member's campaign. Donald Robinson, who helped start the House internship program in 1963 and now directs Boston University's congressional internship program, admits that campaign nepotism pervades the Hill. "It's all patronage," he says. Intern directors are generally circumspect about confirming this on the record. "I'm not going to deny that on occasion we take somebody who doesn't have the ideal credentials or whose grades are not as good, but whose folks have been our supporters," says Kirt Johnson, an assistant to Representative Phil Crane. Off the record, however, they will speak more directly. One says matter-of-factly, "The senator will come to me with four or five résumés, and I have to take them, no matter how full I am. It goes on in every office. Anyone who told you otherwise is a moron." Of his summer interns, this intern director says, about half earned their jobs on merit, half by virtue of their stock.

There's another way to buy a job on the Hill. The Washington Center Internship Program charges $1,400 a semester, on top of school tuition, to place students in non-paying, semester-long positions of all kinds around the capital, ranging from the Smithsonian Institution to the vice president's office. Anyone with a 2.5 grade point average and a few recommendations can get a job. The only catch is that you pay an agent for the privilege.

Even if Mom and Dad's money doesn't get you hired in the first place, you'll need it in order to live in D.C. Most Hill offices don't pay interns: instead of money you earn course credits. Some do take part-time jobs, but Washington is one of the more expensive places to live in the country, and this doesn't always pay the bills. Dorm-style living conditions, for example, are nearly impossible to find for less than $400 a month. (Some placement programs provide cheaper housing at university dorms during the summer, but those slots are limited.) Every year offices accept applicants who later have to turn down the positions because they can't afford it. Many more students, of course, can't even consider applying.

The few offices that do pay tend to be in the Senate. But even these don't pay enough. Senator David Pryor's office pays his interns $150 a week in the hope of expanding the opportunity to a wider range of people. "Even with some small salary," says Henry Woods, Pryor's executive assistant, "it's still prohibitive for many kids."

The problem has been apparent for some time. In 1973 Congress created the LBJ Internship Program to allow every House office to pay its interns for the summer. "The original concept was to bring people to Washington who couldn't afford to come on their

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own," Robinson says. The LBJ program now allots $2,200 annually to every representative for hiring either a single intern for two months or two interns for one month apiece. Still, the cost of airfare, rent, and food can exceed the stipend. "Truthfully, we do have people who refuse the position because they can't afford the housing," says Sue Bell in Representative Bob Michel's office, which pays two summer interns with LBJ funds.

The upshot is a preponderance of wealthy white kids poking around the Hill—and a noticeable underrepresentation of minorities. "The No. 1 cause of the lack of minority interns is that they simply can't afford to live in Washington on an unpaid internship," says Andre Owens, research coordinator of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. Less than 5 percent of the LBJ interns are black, most of them employed by black congressmen. Approximately 2 percent of white members have minority interns working for them. Part of the problem, of course, is that Congress regularly exempts itself from civil rights legislation. "I've been trying to get more minority representatives in our office," says Robert Endries in Senator Alfonse D'Amato's office. "But they have to come to me. I'm not in a position to be doing an outreach here." The CBCF has tried to redress the imbalance by initiating its own paying internship program for Caucus members, which now employs about forty students a year.

The problem extends beyond interns. Since the wealthy and white end up getting most of the internships, they also end up dominating the regular staff positions. An internship on your résumé means more than a foot in the door. Interns talk of "learning your way around the Hill," citing such examples as understanding how a bill goes through Congress and knowing where the cloakroom is. But the real boon of an internship is the access to contacts. Staff regularly help former interns find paying jobs when they return to Washington after school. David Wilson, Robert Dole's intern director, says that all the openings for entry-level positions in the last year have been filled by ex-interns. "If we're not able to provide for them here," he says, "using connections we help them find out where there are openings." Most of the intern directors I spoke to, in fact, said they were interns themselves at one time.

To be fair, Congress doesn't have a monopoly on promoting a class-ridden intern system. Powerful institutions all around Washington demand that young adults do menial chores for long hours at low pay, making it tough for anyone of a middle- or working-class background to land a valuable internship. Even THE NEW REPUBLIC isn't immune: hell, I make $200 a week and don't even get most holidays off. But Congress occupies a special place in the workings of a meritocratic democracy. If its members can't even run a fair internship program, what hope is there for the rest of what they do? •

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

A LITTLE SHAKY

By Robert Bazell

Dr. Iben Browning is now famous, at least among frightened Missourians, for his prediction that a massive earthquake will strike southeastern Missouri on December 3. What isn't generally known is that this is only the most recent of many dubious theories offered by Browning in a long and varied career on the fringes of science. In the early '60s Browning believed that by implanting remote-controlled electrodes in the pain and pleasure centers of the brains of whales, he could guide the animals wherever he wanted. The idea was to strap on hydrogen bombs and send the nuke-bearing whales into the harbors of Soviet port cities. The Sandia National Laboratory near Albuquerque supported this effort. Whale training can be difficult in the New Mexico desert, so Browning started with donkeys. Asses with Browning's electrodes in their skulls were reportedly a common sight on a special track at the top-secret facility.

Dr. Robert Park of the University of Maryland, who headed the surface physics division at Sandia at the time, says that such projects were "much in favor" with the science administrators of Sandia. Neither Park nor anyone else I spoke with knows whether Browning managed to move on to whale work. (Browning did not return my phone calls.) But he later became a paid consultant for NASA, and as the agency was beginning to prepare for the 1969 Apollo landing, he concluded that the Moon was covered with a layer of dust so thick that neither human-occupied nor robot spacecraft could possibly land on it.

With such accomplishments to his credit, Browning, who has a Ph.D. in zoology, eventually became a professional predictor, not just of earthquakes, but of the economy, politics, climate, crop yields, and many other things. He publishes the monthly *Browning Newsletter*, with a subscription list that he claims includes major corporations and investment houses. He also offers glimpses from his crystal ball in speeches to business groups.

Meanwhile, residents of southeastern Missouri are filling their shelves with emergency provisions, closing schools and businesses, and in some cases leaving town in anticipation of the great earthquake. In public appearances, interviews, and a videotape retailing for $99, Browning has said that there is a 50 percent chance that an earthquake measuring between 6.5 and 7.5 on the Richter scale will strike the New Madrid fault within forty-eight hours of December 3. The fault runs from northeastern Arkansas to southern Illinois, and such a quake on it would inflict massive damage. Because of the make-

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up of the Earth's crust, quakes in the eastern two-thirds of the United States, though rare, will cause more violent shaking than a quake of similar force out West. A series of big earthquakes hit the New Madrid fault in 1811 and 1812. Witnesses wrote that giant trees were torn from the ground by their roots and that the Mississippi River appeared to flow backward.

Browning's New Madrid forecast attracted attention because he claimed that at a public meeting he successfully predicted the October 17, 1989, quake in the San Francisco Bay Area. That claim was repeated without question along with Browning's New Madrid forecast on several television stations and in newspapers, including *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*. When William Booth of *The Washington Post* asked the *Times* reporter why he wrote that Browning had successfully forecast the Bay Area quake, the *Times* man replied that he had "contacted people who said they had heard him say it."

Browning offered his alleged prediction at a convention of farm and construction equipment manufacturers in San Francisco on October 10, 1989. A transcript obtained by the National Earthquake Prediction Council shows that Browning said that on October 16 (not 17), "There will probably be several quakes around the world [of] Richter 6-plus, and there may be a volcano or two." He never said where those earthquakes would strike. Quakes of magnitude six or greater strike somewhere in the world on average once every three days, so predicting one somewhere for a given day is not a bad bet.

Even before the transcript was analyzed, almost all reputable geologists and seismologists scoffed at Browning's forecast. No one has ever predicted an earthquake with the kind of accuracy Browning claims. (He bases his predictions on the alignment of the Earth, the Sun, and the Moon.) But Browning had one crucial defender. Dr. David Stewart, director of the Center for Earthquake Studies at Southeast Missouri State University, close by the New Madrid fault, embraced Browning's prediction enthusiastically. Stewart's endorsement allowed many reporters to portray Browning's forecast as part of a reasonable scientific debate between two schools of thought, when in fact it was Browning and Stewart against the rest of the world of science. A check of Stewart's background reveals why the two may be ideological soulmates. According to officials at the U.S. Geological Survey, in 1974, when Stewart was on the faculty of the University of North Carolina, he predicted that a large earthquake would strike the Wilmington area within a year and asked the governor to shut down a nearby nuclear power plant. When the USGS concluded the prediction lacked merit, Stewart "tried to refine the prediction with paranormal means," according to *Science* magazine. He even flew over the site of the expected quake in a helicopter with a psychic by his side.

Browning's act, I am told, plays well on the chicken and peas circuit. Business conventioneers enjoy speakers who claim to reveal the future. But to stay in the profession a predictor must claim at least some successes. Browning says that he foretold the eruption of Mount St. Helens. A closer examination reveals that he offered his prediction after the USGS had already evacuated the region in anticipation of an eruption.

What else does Browning forecast? In an interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, eight months *after* the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Browning predicted that "communism in its present form will cease to exist." From a man offering such insight, the people of Missouri should have little to fear.

ROBERT BAZELL is the science correspondent for NBC News.

Helmut Kohl, historic blunderer.

HERR KLUTZ

By Anne McElvoy

BERLIN

When Otto von Bismarck first united Germany in 1871, he announced that he had waited until he heard the steps of God resounding through events and leapt forward to grasp a corner of the mantle. As Helmut Kohl leaps forward to grasp victory in the first pan-German elections since 1933, we are still awaiting a comparable rhetorical tribute to trip from his lips.

He did try. Rising ponderously to his feet in the Berlin Reichstag the morning after unification on October 3, he began his keynote address to the first united parliament with the words, "*Meine D-Mark und Herren*"—My Deutsche Mark and Gentlemen. As his aides buried their heads in their hands, one of them was heard to groan that Helmut Kohl is the only statesman on the world stage who can bungle the line "Ladies and Gentlemen." And it didn't escape notice that the slip also informed the nation what was really on the chancellor's mind when it came to unity.

The chancellor's gaffes have grown to be a tradition of his rule. Like the speech in which he expressed the hope that Germany should not be divided "for a thousand years"—"Not that figure, Herr Bundeskanzler," said an aide, hastily reminding him of the echo of the "Thousand-Year Reich." Asked recently what had kept him going in the exhausting run-up to unification, he replied, "A good meal in the pub now and then and taking the odd nap in the car." After a nudge from his ever vigilant aide, he hauled out some boilerplate about the common destiny of East and West Germans and fell back onto his stock phrase, "This is a great day in German history." In the Bonn Chancellery they term the job of accompanying their

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leader to speaking engagements "Helmut-sitting."

He is six-foot-four with a build that reminds one of an oak cupboard squeezed into a serge suit, the external embodiment of much of the worst of modern Germany: overweight, ambitious, and self-satisfied. His national nickname is Birne (light bulb) because of the shape of his large head. There are so many jokes about Kohl's slowness that a new compendium is issued every Christmas. They are best summarized by the one that runs, "Does Helmut mind all the nasty jokes about him?" "Only when his secretary explains the punchlines." His nasal, lisping, provincial accent ritually mangles the sibilant German language into a mash of mumbled non sequiturs.

Kohl has no grasp of the power of symbolism. Ronald Reagan never forgave him for taking him to Bitburg. Just as German-Soviet relationships were thawing in 1986, Kohl compared Gorbachev with Goebbels. "I meant no offense," he said as diplomats ran for cover. Recently he has tried to mend fences with Poland, but the perfunctory atmosphere of his visits to Warsaw and the border town of Frankfurt on the Oder betray that he really cannot see what the Poles are so worked up about after all this time.

To Germany's cultured classes, it seems like a trick of the malevolent demon governing the nation's history that Kohl should be the chancellor of longed-for unity. The comparison with the Iron Chancellor Bismarck serves only to highlight its absurdity. Kohl is a political type Germans damningly call *ein Kanzler für normale Zeiten*—a chancellor for normal times, presiding over a flourishing, stable society motivated by modest petit bourgeois aspirations. Now, however, he has been given the role of chancellor *für ausserordentliche Zeiten*—for outstanding times. In the Shakespearean triptych of those born great, those who become great, and those who have greatness thrust upon them, he belongs firmly in the last camp.

His success is the fruit of dogged, gradual alliance-building, the sort of thing his rivals could not be bothered with. He began his career studying philosophy and political science at Heidelberg University and entered the young Christian Democratic Union because it appealed to his Christian beliefs and strong regional identity. Attempts to probe a more philosophical commitment from him generally fail. He believes in God, prosperity, and the power of common sense, like the majority of his country's middle-aged, hardworking citizens.

He was a member of the regional parliament at the age of 29, tirelessly working for his home area, the marshy Rhineland near the French border. He comes from Oggersheim, a village as dour as its name is comical: the Peoria of the Federal Republic. It is not unusual for politicians to rise from such small-town anonymity to prominence, but most who do leave their Oggersheims behind them. Not the chancellor, who enthusiastically took Presidents Gorbachev and Bush to his unprepossessing home for a special treat of *Eisbein* (fatty leg of pork), sauerkraut, and other unpalatable Rhineland delicacies. He does not disguise his pride at the family's well-tended villa there, the middlest of middle-class German dream homes with a wooden plaque on the gate reading "H. Kohl." "It's a wonder he isn't taking Bush and Gorby round to admire the neighbor's new curtains," said one Bonn correspondent sourly watching the chancellor wallow in his provincialism.

Kohl had history on his side from the beginning, presiding over the blossoming of the Rhineland Palatinate, Germany's historical poorhouse and now a thriving light industry belt. He secured the first absolute majority for the center-right Christian Democrats in the region's history, and the national party began to see this bumbling giant as an electoral miracle-worker. He narrowly beat the more polished Gerhard Stoltenberg for the party leadership in 1976, and continued building alliances in every region and then masterfully with the tiny Liberal Democrats. In 1982 the latter deserted the troubled Social Democrats for Kohl's CDU and smoothed his path to power in a coalition.

Having acceded to the throne, he has proved impossible to heave from it. He reads his party better than any other since its postwar founding father Konrad Adenauer, stifling challenges before they have had the chance to grow into plots. When his old friend Heiner Geissler tried to steer the party toward the left in 1989 he was instantly dismissed as party secretary. When Baden-Württemburg's premier Lothar Spath's popularity began to look like a threat to Kohl's dominance, he found himself hoisted off the party executive.

Kohl is understandably close to President Bush. Both are easygoing, homely men, and respond to pressure by doing nothing until the pressure subsides. Faced with a major difficulty like Germany's role in the Gulf, Kohl's instinct is to sit it out. Since the start of the crisis, Germany has been criticized for not altering the constitutional clause preventing participation in conflicts outside the NATO area. Kohl admitted that this clause, a product of postwar fears of resurgent German militarism, is outdated but would not have it discussed until the election is out of the way and the new parliament established. That takes us into early 1991. By then with a bit of luck everyone will be so preoccupied with the climax of the conflict that they will have stopped asking him for troops. Like the lazy guest at a dinner party, he will wait until the hostess has finished washing the dishes and then wander into the kitchen saying, "Oh dear, have you really done them already?"

Kohl is a leader whose strength and support is to be found at the *Stammtisch*—the locals' table in the provincial pub, where they call him *unser Kanzler* (our chancellor)—rather than in the salons and universities of the metropoles, or abroad. He secured Gorbachev's agreement to German unity without even informing the allies that he was going to the Soviet Union to ask for it. French President François Mitterrand was heard to utter, "*Comme il est inelegant*" after a meeting with him, a remark taken to refer both to his personal style and to

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his politics. Margaret Thatcher has loathed him since the day two years ago when they met by chance on holiday in Austria. Kohl spent little time with her, pleading a mountain of work. She encountered him again that afternoon in a café enjoying a leisurely cream cake and coffee with friends.

Trying to define his policies is rather like defining George Bush's. Kohl rarely speaks about home affairs, leaving that to his ministers. Only since unity has he discussed economic impact, promising no new taxes to finance the accession of the East. The unified German taxpayer is currently reading his lips with trepidation. His arm's-length policy toward Moscow was converted overnight into a passionate embrace when he realized that he needed Gorbachev's goodwill to allow speedy unity. Kohl has barely disguised his treatment of unification as an electoral toy.

He can get away with such inconstancy because he is backed by the world's most skilled foreign minister, Hans Dietrich Genscher, who has held the job for seventeen years, and President Richard von Weizsäcker, who provides the intellectual kudos and historical awareness of which Kohl is totally devoid. Thanks to them and to shameless manipulation of national pride, he's a shoo-in for next week's national elections. He intends to enjoy his popularity while he still has it. As most Germans sense, and few foreigners believe, Kohl's rule will probably end next time around, when the price rather than the pomp of unity will govern the electorate's choice.

ANNE MCELVOY is Berlin correspondent for *The Times* of London.

The case for war now.

GET IT OVER WITH

By Frank J. Gaffney Jr.

The prospect of imminent war with Iraq is not the result of impulsive policy-making in Washington. It does not even have much to do with the status of Kuwait. It is due to three indisputable facts that ensure that—sooner or later—there will be a war in the Persian Gulf and that do not allow for a peaceful resolution of the crisis, however much we might wish for it.

The first involves the ambition of Saddam Hussein. His thirst for regional and even global influence was a matter of record long before Kuwait fell victim to it. We may never know why—in one of those momentous historical decisions—he checked his invading armies at the Saudi border, instead of thrusting them across it and presenting the then distant Americans with a fait accompli in Saudi Arabia as well as Kuwait. But there can be no doubt that Hussein intends ultimately to control the oil of that kingdom, the Emirates, and Oman, just as surely as he now controls that of the Kuwaiti emir.

Similarly, with his attack on "Arab brothers" in Kuwait, Hussein has served notice on the relatively moderate Muslim regimes in the region that he plans to be the unrivaled leader of the Islamic world. Should he survive the present crisis with his power intact, some combination of the overt, external threat from Baghdad and Iraqi-backed internal subversion will endanger all the Arab leaders now involved in the anti-Iraq coalition. There is also, of course, no doubt about Hussein's designs on Israel. His growing capacity to launch a devastating attack on the Jewish state is required by his claim to be the leader of militant Islam.

The second fact is Hussein's despotic control of his nation. With a brutality rarely matched in modern times, the Iraqi tyrant has suppressed dissent, consolidated power in his own hands, and destroyed any indigenous check on his actions. Given Iraq's geographical situation—within striking distance, literally, of one-half of the world's oil supplies—his ability to translate personal whim into malevolent national undertaking cannot be underestimated.

Third, there is the matter of the enormous arsenal Iraq has amassed over the past several decades. Thanks to the Soviet Union and France, Iraq's armed forces boast vast quantities of front-line tanks, armored personnel carriers, combat aircraft, and anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles. Worse yet, with the help of as many as 200 Western companies, Hussein's inventory includes chemical and biological munitions and the potential of sending them over long distances via ballistic missiles.

At the moment it is a matter of some dispute just how formidable these capabilities are: whether, for example, all of Iraq's missiles are equipped with warheads capable of mounting chemical or biological agents. There is also disagreement about whether Iraq's longer-range missile force includes the new 560-mile, highly accurate, Soviet-made SS-12 Scaleboard. And though Hussein's program for an Islamic nuclear bomb was derailed for a time by Israel's 1981 raid, experts differ on how long. The smart money says Baghdad could manufacture a relatively crude but devastating atomic bomb in relatively short order.

The convergence of these three phenomena—Hussein's desire for territorial expansion, the lack of internal checks on his power, and the military hardware to realize Hussein's goals—gives rise to a crisis that cannot be resolved by economic sanctions alone. They may weaken the country in the very long-run; they may ultimately make the price of holding a plundered Kuwait more than Baghdad is willing to bear. But they cannot transform the nature of the regime or the substantial military threat it poses to the entire region and beyond. A sanctions-only policy would merely postpone a day of reckoning, and, when it comes, make it far

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bloodier than it would be today.

Accordingly, the United States should initiate hostilities with Iraq at the earliest possible moment. Sufficient American forces now exist in the region to execute a properly crafted military option. As attractive as delay may seem to permit an increase in U.S. military capability, it also allows the Iraqis to enhance *their* position and negate whatever advantages we hope to gain. Iraq also has the strategic advantage of playing on its home ground. To maintain military initiative and avoid further erosion of domestic popular support, the president must move sooner rather than later.

Our military operations should be guided by three objectives: to neutralize the long-range weapons at Iraq's disposal; to topple Hussein and Iraq's ruling elite; to cut off—and in due course reduce—Iraqi forces in Kuwait, while denying them an option of breaking out into offensive operations in Saudi Arabia.

To carry out the first objective, the United States would rely on the powerful land- and sea-based aircraft and missiles available to attack key, fixed Iraqi military assets. These include: leadership and control facilities; plants and storage sites for chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs; ballistic missile depots and launch facilities; airfields; and terrorist headquarters and training complexes.

The purpose here is not to "flatten Baghdad" or to devastate the Iraqi civilian economy. It would not even entail the complete physical destruction of Iraq's military capabilities. There's no need for this. Bombing civilian Iraq would merely alienate those many sectors of Iraqi society hostile to Hussein and loyal to their country. And the utter devastation of Iraq would create yet another Middle Eastern power vacuum, which Assad of Syria or the mullahs of Iran would be tempted to fill.

The second objective complements the first. An effort to remove Hussein from power will enhance the interruption of Baghdad's command and control functions and help quell whatever will its military has to resist. This is a task that will likely require unconventional forces, on the ground and taking advantage of the political chaos likely to follow American air assault.

Between the disaffected elements of the Iraqi military, and the Shiites, Kurds, Turks, Iranians, Kuwaitis, and Saudis, there should be sufficient manpower for such a covert operation. The U.S. role might be limited to supplying training, equipment, and logistical support. And if the Soviets are such committed partners in the anti-Hussein coalition, is it too much to ask that the thousands of Soviet advisers and KGB personnel in Iraq provide information that would help the operation?

Finally, the U.S. armed forces should concern themselves with containing rather than crushing Iraqi forces in Kuwait. MacArthur's famous island-hopping campaign in World War II offers a model: powerful enemy bastions should be circumvented, cut off from their sources of resupply and induced to surrender without the carnage involved in massive frontal assaults on heavily defended positions. U.S. armor and anti-tank capabilities on the ground in Saudi Arabia today should be more than sufficient to prevent a breakout by such troops as might remain loyal to Hussein's regime. Moreover, as it becomes clear that that regime is no longer in charge—and that Hussein is unable to exercise his own brutal brand of army discipline—the appetite of Iraqi troops in Kuwait for breakout should sharply diminish. For that matter, the idea of risking life and limb to continue to occupy a largely despoiled land should look less attractive too.

For some, the most troubling part of this prescription may not be its call for military action, or even the Iraqi targets for such an attack. Rather, it may be the notion that the United States should be the initiator of the conflict and the principal (if not exclusive) anti-Iraqi combatant. This flies in the face of the much vaunted idea of an emerging "world order" predicated on collective security. It also runs counter to the notion that U.S. interests would suffer lasting damage in the region were we to be seen acting unilaterally.

In fact, the multinational approach to resisting Iraqi aggression is useful only insofar as it serves as a means to end that aggression and neutralize Hussein's capacity for engaging in it in the future. For all its unprecedented displays of international solidarity, this approach has failed to end Iraq's rape of Kuwait. Even its most enthusiastic supporters have shied away from suggesting it could serve to disarm Saddam Hussein.

Unfortunately, preserving the anti-Iraq solidarity of the international community has become an end in itself. It amounts to a lowest-common-denominator strategy that is all too susceptible to the paralyzing effects produced when a U.N. Security Council member or other actor balks at some further escalation of the campaign to pressure Hussein. What is more, U.S. persistence in maintaining the fiction of alliance cohesiveness could prove the undoing of successful policy in this conflict. Not only is it certain to make adoption of the military option more difficult; it may also fatally compromise the operational security and viability of that action. The Soviet Union may continue to provide intelligence information to Baghdad—including data about the thrust and composition of an allied assault. Our newfound Syrian partners may turn into a fifth column in Saudi Arabia, operating against U.S. forces.

What is all-important in this crisis is success in defining the objectives properly and in realizing them. Failure to do so with allies will not be measurably less dangerous than will failure without them. If the United States destroys Hussein and neutralizes Iraq's offensive military potential, the salutary effect on other regional and international actors and even on Islamic radicals will silence—if not convert—critics and carpers. And the price, and probability, of success will be far better if we get on with the task now rather than later.

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WHY WAR?

By Robert W. Tucker

Nothing has illuminated as clearly the significance of the passing of the cold war as the disparity in this nation's responses to events in the Persian Gulf in 1980 and 1990. A decade ago two crises—the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iran-Iraq war—revealed a potential external threat to Western access and a serious indigenous threat to what remained of the Western position in the region. Yet the response of the Carter administration, modest and hesitant though it was, provoked a great deal of controversy at the time.

In 1990 the outside power that only yesterday was seen as threatening to take control of the Gulf, and by doing so strike a mortal blow to the Western alliance, today is little more than a bearer of messages for the putative belligerents. Iraq, the present threat, is a power of modest proportions. It will remain so whether or not it manages to retain its hold over Kuwait along with the retention of its present military power. Even if Saddam Hussein has all of the demonic qualities that are now attributed to him, the Iraqi regime would not pose the threat to Western interests in the Gulf (or elsewhere) that the Soviet Union might have in 1980. Yet in 1990, 400,000 troops will have been deployed and an international coalition marshaled in the largest display of American military strength since Vietnam.

The other major difference between then and now is the energy outlook. In 1980 experts agreed that it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to compensate for the shortfall in oil supplies resulting from the Iranian revolution and the Iraq-Iran war. It might be done if Saudi Arabia were to increase production to unheard-of levels, but its willingness to do so was uncertain. By contrast, in 1990 the shortfall in oil supplies caused by the severance of Iraq and Kuwait production was scarcely felt before it was remedied by an obliging Saudi Arabia. It is important to stress that the Bush administration has done today what the Carter administration did not do yesterday in spite of the fact that circumstances are less—not more—straitened.

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The crisis has also been an object lesson in the liabilities to which this nation's diplomacy is habitually prone. In 1980 Washington was full of talk about the replacement of Iran by Iraq as the American pillar in the region. The strategy would have meant at least the partial approval of Iraq's expansionist aims in the Gulf. In the event, it was not pursued, but the next best course was. The American government looked with tolerance on Saddam Hussein's efforts to make Iraq the dominant power in the region, both during the war with Iran and after Iraq's victory. Until the very eve of the invasion of Kuwait, Washington remained unmindful of the need to re-establish a local balance of power in the Gulf. It is not clear that this need is fully appreciated even today. If it were, there might be less assurance about the desirability of destroying Iraq as a regional power.

If these are the only clear lessons of the crisis, they are quite modest ones. In the view of many observers, they are altogether too modest. Thus the crisis has been seen as a dramatic refutation of the so-called declinist argument—the idea that the American role in the future will be a more restrained one than it was during the long period of the cold war. The view that we are entering a multipolar world has also been dealt a fatal blow. The states held up as the challengers of this dominance—Germany and Japan—remain as dependent as ever on American power. Military, and not economic, power presumably remains as significant as ever.

On this view, it is not change in Europe that must be found to reveal the future but the events in the Gulf. Why this should be so is not apparent. In many ways, in fact, it is the Gulf—and not Europe—that is the anomaly. That there is no other commodity that has the crucial significance of oil; that there is no parallel to the dependence the developed and developing economies have on the energy resources in the Gulf; that the oil is concentrated in an area that remains relatively inaccessible and highly unstable; and that possession of it has afforded an unparalleled financial base whereby an expansionist regime may hope to realize its aggressive aspirations—these considerations are so apparent that to enumerate them again seems redundant.

The conclusion that forces itself on the observer is

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that the crisis is close to sui generis. There is only one Persian Gulf. That fortunate fact must be the point of departure for a consideration of the crisis and of its broader implications. The world is not rife with potential Saddam Husseins, situated in comparably strategic regions, possessed of the same resources and armed to the teeth. We may take comfort in this; if the contrary were the case, the prospects for a stable international system would be very poor.

These considerations apart, however, the outcome of the crisis will almost assuredly prove significant for the post-cold-war order. It will reveal whether a domestic base continues to exist in the post-cold-war world for an activist American foreign policy. In this respect, as in others, the parallel between Vietnam and the Gulf crisis is apparent. What is not apparent are the implications thereby held out for the course the American government should follow.

What is striking in the Bush administration's response to the Iraqi seizure of Kuwait is not that it opposed the action, but that it did so almost without qualification. From the outset the administration was officially committed not only to the defense of Saudi Arabia but also to the unconditional restoration of the *status quo ante*. Unofficially, the administration's objectives appeared to go even further, encompassing the destruction of Saddam Hussein's capability to wage chemical, biological, and nuclear war. And since Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait and the loss of the regime's most prized military weapons would constitute a humiliating defeat, most people reasonably concluded that the downfall of Hussein was yet another objective—an impression reinforced by administration officials in early off-the-record remarks.

This was not the only response the American government might have made in meeting the Iraqi attack on Kuwait. The military forces it committed almost immediately to the Gulf could have been deployed for a strictly limited and defensive purpose: to preserve the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia. This aim would not have been incompatible with the institution of measures designed to squeeze Iraq, economically and financially, particularly measures to prevent Baghdad from marketing its oil. Kuwait, the victim of aggression, would not have been simply forgotten. At the same time, the liberation of Kuwait would not have been established as the American government's highest priority, in pursuit of which it would commit large forces to Saudi Arabia with the all but declared intent of employing them should other means fail to force Iraq's withdrawal. The defense of Saudi Arabia did not require large land forces. A force modest by comparison with the one deployed, together with the clearest warning of the measures to be taken directly against Iraq in the event it attacked Saudi Arabia, would have been sufficient.

This was the road not taken. It was not taken because in the flush of optimism that marked the initial stage of the crisis, the conviction prevailed that it did not have to be taken. Clearly the course outlined above had the appearance of second best. It left the aggressor in possession of his ill-gotten gains for what might be a considerable period. From the outset the administration had portrayed the crisis in legalistic-moralistic terms that seemed to require more than a modest and deliberate response. It did so, in part, because it wanted to place the crisis in a new, post-cold-war framework. The United States was no longer the defender of freedom against the forces of totalitarian tyranny. Instead, it would be the policeman impartially enforcing the rules of a still fragile international system. This role required that a sudden shift be made from the Western alliance as the principal vehicle for American policy to the United Nations. The Iraqi attack appeared as a classic case of the kind of aggression a collective security system was designed to suppress. The rhetoric of world order is not a mere adornment of policy, but reflects the assumption of a new role for the nation. In this context, the course followed in the Gulf becomes easier to comprehend. Aggression not only necessitated an unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait but an expeditious withdrawal. Aggression could not be rewarded; punishment must be swift and condign.

At the beginning too, the belief prevailed that there was little need to compromise on less than an optimal outcome. An extraordinary international coalition had quickly formed to oppose the aggressor, and it had agreed on measures to enforce Iraq's economic isolation. In the flush of optimism that marked the first stage of the crisis, it was expected that the embargo would soon be enough to compel Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. Even more remarkably, there is little sign that troops were sent to Saudi Arabia in the belief that they would have to fight. Instead, their mere presence was thought to be enough to achieve the objectives for which they were sent. The decisive act was that of commitment itself. Those who remember U.S. involvement in Vietnam will note the parallel here. In that case as well an administration believed that if an aggressor once saw we were committed to opposing him with force he would back off. But North Vietnam did not back off, and to date neither has Iraq.

The public, like the administration, first responded to Iraq's aggression with a good deal of wishful thinking. The only plausible way to account for the public's acceptance of the administration's commitment of forces to the Gulf is to assume that it somehow did not equate it with war. The government had drawn a line in the sand of Saudi Arabia, but this was seen as something quite different from war. The government had also undertaken to compel Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, but this was an objective that the embargo would presumably accomplish. And the public apparently shared the conviction of the nation's leaders that Hussein would withdraw once he saw that we were entirely committed.

Thus the seriousness of the commitment was obscured. Any other explanation of the public's acceptance of its government's actions must assume either that there has been a sea change in the nation's anti-

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interventionist disposition, or that despite this disposition, the public at once sensed that Iraq's aggression had jeopardized vital national interests. There is little evidence to support either of these assumptions. Despite public tolerance of Grenadas and Panamas (little more than symbolic uses of military power), the evidence points to a persisting anti-interventionist mood. To be sure, it may still yield before necessity. But the public must first clearly apprehend that a case of national necessity has arisen, and this it did not do. Instead, it displayed a great deal of uncertainty and confusion over the interests at stake in the Gulf and, accordingly, the justification of the intervention. As long as the consequences of intervention did not appear onerous, this did not matter much. Now that they hold out the growing prospect of war, and potentially heavy American casualties, the issue of the interests justifying action has taken on ever greater importance.

Despite the growing criticism that the administration has failed to articulate the interests at stake, the record simply does not bear out this charge. "What is at stake," the president declared when he first committed forces to Saudi Arabia, "is truly vital. Our action in the Gulf is about fighting aggression and preserving the sovereignty of nations . . . about ensuring the peace and stability of the world [and] . . . about maintaining our access to energy resources that are key not just to the functioning of this country, but to the entire world." The same themes were taken up in the president's address on September 11 to Congress: "No peaceful international order is possible if larger states can devour their smaller neighbors." Nor would the new order be possible were we to permit "a resource so vital to be dominated by one so ruthless."

These themes have since been invoked many times by administration officials. They have been lumped together by observers under the rubric "oil and aggression," though the administration has shown a decided preference for reversing the order. In fact, the two interests cannot be readily differentiated. Without some semblance of order in the Persian Gulf, there is no real assurance of access to the oil there. Without the assurance of reasonable access to the oil, there can be no assurance of the effective functioning of the global economy, the principal pillar of the emerging international order.

Whatever one may think of this justification for the

Engulfed

Interservice rivalry was supposed to be resolved by the Goldwater-Nichols Military Reorganization Act of 1986, which helped coordinate the armed services by strengthening the power of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and creating more central control over the budget. On one front in the Gulf crisis—the command structure—the act is working. The line from Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Colin Powell to the theater commander (H. Norman Schwarzkopf) to the ground, air, and sea commanders is short and direct. But in procurement and strategic planning—areas vital for successful combat—the services have shown that they are still fighting each other. The forces and weapons now assembled are not the result of a joint war plan but are what the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force have bought to suit their service self-image—and to impress Congress in future budget battles.

The Army, to begin with, sent over a brigade from the 2nd Armored Division at Fort Hood, Texas, a division scheduled for deactivation. Its tanks, desperately needed in the Gulf, had been mothballed and run into the ground. Why didn't they pull a brigade sooner from the 3rd Armored in Europe, whose tanks are battle-ready and would have had to travel a shorter distance? The likelihood is that it was to prove to the secretary of defense and Congress that the 2nd Armored (George Patton's own famed "Hell on Wheels") should remain on the active list. There are good arguments for retaining it. But sending worn-out tanks to a battle zone is no way to make the point.

Meanwhile, the Navy sent three large carriers, a battleship, and eight nuclear submarines into the Arabian Sea south of Saudi Arabia. From there the battleship's guns cannot reach their targets. The missiles they carry would be better off on smaller, more maneuverable ships. What's more, only a few of the aircraft (A-6s) can reach their targets, and then can only loiter over the battle zone for a very brief time. Why the deployment in the Arabian Sea? The Navy doesn't want to risk its carriers in the narrow confines of the Persian Gulf because they're highly vulnerable there, and the limited space makes it difficult for the carriers to launch and recover aircraft. But at least one of the carriers, without its planes, could have been better used as a fast transport for Army and Marine personnel and equipment. There are Air Force and Marine aircraft on the ground in Saudi Arabia capable of reaching the necessary targets.

The reason we have carriers, battleships, and submarines in the area instead of fast sea-lift ships to move the troops and supplies of other services to battle is predictable. It's what the admirals saw as vital. It's not what a rational overview of overall needs would have provided. The vital sea-lift ships have consequently been undermanned and underfunded. We've already seen one near-disastrous result—two of the fast ships carrying the first of the M-1 tanks broke down and had to be towed across the ocean.

The Air Force has its own unnecessary equipment. It has flown twenty-two Stealth fighters (F-117s) to Saudi Arabia—planes primarily designed for air-to-air combat—for combat with an adversary whose air weapons are anti-aircraft missiles and guns stationed on the ground. This is also the plane that so disastrously missed its target in Panama. And moving these aircraft, which Congress has been unenthusiastic about funding, required diverting

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administration's actions, it seems misplaced to charge that the issue of interest has been neglected. One may object to the manner in which the administration has developed its case, but it is hard to see how this would alter matters much. If anything, the administration has exaggerated, not minimized, the interests it contends are at stake in the Gulf. It has insisted that the response to Iraq will constitute the critical precedent in defining the post-cold-war international order—indeed, in determining whether there will be order. This may give altogether too great an importance to the stakes of the crisis. But that is scarcely the charge brought by those who insist that interest has been neglected.

Why, then, the insistence that there is a case for interest that has yet to be made? The answer seems clear enough. The public has not responded positively to the prospect of war against Iraq. The problem is not that the administration has failed to make the effort in persuasion, or that the effort that has been made is without merit. Although its magnitude has been greatly exaggerated, there is a significant interest in order, just as there is an interest in ensuring access to oil without the political strings Hussein is likely to attach—and at a reasonable price. It follows that there is an important interest in the containment of Iraq's power and influence.

The public has not been unresponsive to this case. It simply has not responded to it in a manner that points to the acceptance of war as a means to vindicate interest. And it has not done so, it appears, because it does not see a threat to the nation's security that would justify war. It may well be that it does not fully understand the admittedly difficult case the administration has made. Yet there are also signs that to the extent the public does understand, it simply does not find it persuasive as a rationale for what may be a costly military encounter. Neither reasonably priced oil nor international order nor even the prospect of an Iraq stripped of weapons of mass destruction has been enough to persuade it to accept the hazards of war in the Gulf. Once again, we are reminded of Vietnam and of the difficulty the Johnson administration had in persuading an ever more skeptical public that the security interests at stake justified the sacrifices demanded.

The Bush administration's dilemma is that it has committed itself and the nation to objectives that can probably be obtained only through war. For those objectives are tantamount to the unconditional surrender

tanker aircraft from troop-carrying duties. Air Force officers argue that the F-117s are unique and necessary, but it's tough to see what they can do that the F-111s, moved from the United States and Britain to Turkey and Spain, can't.

At the same time, reports from the field indicate that the F-16s, which are to bear the burden of the air-to-ground attack, lack adequate electronic warfare protection because of Air Force withdrawal from the joint Air Force-Navy airborne electronic jammer program. Old Crows, the electronic warfare experts of the Air Force, rate the Iraqi air defenses as better than those of the North Vietnamese, whose Soviet Sam 6s and 7s were a constant threat.

Finally, the Marines. Those who came from Diego Garcia were the first to arrive with tanks to support the vastly outnumbered and outarmored initial Army airborne forces. Unfortunately, the Marines' tanks were obsolescent M-60s, which had difficulty in the desert and are no match for the T-72s of the Iraqis. This created one of the most dangerous elements in the early tactical picture. The British "Desert Rats" tank brigade had to be pulled out of NATO and rushed to the desert to support the Marines. Why the glitch? Marine-Army rivalry made the Marines slow to accept the M1A1 "Abrams" tank, and Navy/Marine funding priorities were based on a doctrine that neglected tanks.

So all three armed services flaunt their favorite weapons systems on Arabia's sands like peacocks in a royal palace, and assert that all is close to perfection. Even before the crisis there were warning signs that all wasn't well. Last spring the Air Force retired, with much fanfare about a peace dividend, the last of its SR-71 "Blackbird" Mach 3 spy planes. The problem is that the SR-71, built in the early '60s, is still considered a highly effective aircraft. Flying at 80,000 feet, the Blackbird has taken detailed photographs, even through clouds, of suspected hostage locations in Lebanon, Libyan chemical works, Soviet troop movements, and suspected nuclear facilities in a growing number of countries. In the present crisis its presence would be invaluable.

Why isn't it there? Though funded by the Air Force, the Blackbird worked primarily for the Navy, the Army, and the CIA. Despite pleas from these services, the Air Force retired the plane because it had little to do with the Air Force-favored missions of bombing and air combat. The Blackbird was also vulnerable politically because the planes were already built and paid for and spare parts were available to keep them flying past the year 2000: there were no jobs to be spread around the districts of important senators and representatives.

To perpetuate the problem, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney has asked the individual services to produce their own five-year force plans, though Goldwater-Nichols specifically states that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in conjunction with commanders in chief of vital areas around the globe, is to produce a unified war-fighting plan. Now we're going to get another service wish list. To their credit, both the Senate and House Armed Service Committees have been putting pressure on Cheney and the Joint Chiefs to conform to this area of Goldwater-Nichols. Let's hope it doesn't take a disaster in the Gulf for them to win the argument.

ARTHUR T. HADLEY

Arthur T. Hadley has been writing about military affairs since World War II.

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of Hussein. Yet there is no assurance that the nation will support a war against Iraq. Of course, a war of the briefest duration, marked by complete success and conducted with only the lightest casualties, would receive subsequent public endorsement. But these circumstances cannot be counted on, whatever the size of the forces finally committed to oppose Iraq. A prudent statecraft must assume that the circumstances of the conflict will be less than ideal, that the war will be marked by unexpected turns, and that the casualties may be substantial. The result may well be a domestic reaction that will prove disastrous for the Bush presidency and, of far greater importance, for the future of American foreign policy. Rather than the first act of a brave new drama, the crisis could turn out to be the tragic last act of an old drama, and of one that had been until now an impressive success.

The domestic consequences of undertaking a war whose justification the nation finds obscure and inadequate have been badly underestimated. The administration has shown greater concern for the opinion of foreign governments than it has for that of its own public. The deference shown the U.N. in relation to measures that may lead to war has been greater than the deference shown Congress. Yet it is the domestic reaction to the administration's course that will prove decisive in the end. It is the domestic consequence of the crisis that will surely have the greatest effect in determining the future of the nation's foreign policy.

These consequences are entirely unpredictable, given the present public mood and what can only be called its raw character. To date, the public has been disposed to endorse the ends of American policy in the Gulf while remaining at best ambiguous toward the means. A substantial portion of what passes for elite opinion in foreign policy shares this outlook. These are warning signs a wise government should heed, for they too are reminiscent of Vietnam. In that war a striking disparity eventually appeared between ends that were broadly supported and means that, once their price became clear, were widely opposed.

Given the administration's ever greater commitment in the Gulf—tantamount now to a conditional ultimatum to go to war early next year—it was all but inevitable that as time went by a familiar pattern would appear. The interests initially set forth as the justification for the action have receded, and the fact of the commitment itself has assumed ever greater importance. In the end, the argument of prestige is increasingly invoked as the interest of interests before which all other considerations must yield. It may have been unwise to have set out on the course we did, the argument runs, but that is now the past (presumably almost as irrelevant as the pre-August 2 past). To alter course now, to turn in the slightest degree from those objectives to which we are now committed, would mean not only that Hussein had won in the Gulf, but also that American prestige would suffer an irreparable blow, one possibly fatal to our role in the post-cold-war world.

Since the 1960s the appeal to prestige has been made on a number of occasions. Each time we have been warned that we risked becoming "irrelevant." After surviving so many irreparable losses in prestige and remaining quite relevant, a measure of skepticism toward this view today is surely in order. Even so, prestige is undoubtedly significant. The American government has committed the nation to a course that can be abandoned, if only in part, at a price. To insist that there is no price to be paid in abandoning commitments is to believe that in foreign policy the principle of accountability does not exist. The issue that must be faced is whether that price will prove less than that entailed by persisting in the commitment. If this issue cannot be resolved with the assurance we would like, one thing can be safely said: it is a form of policy dementia to persist in an unwise course simply because of an earlier unwise commitment. This was one of the plain lessons of Vietnam.

The administration must choose today between the loss of prestige that will follow abandonment of its present course and the hazards, above all domestic, of war. It is a cruel choice, but barring Hussein's sudden, unexpected capitulation, it is an inescapable choice. With every passing day the president has increasingly committed the nation to the course of war, the principal result of which may well be to circumscribe severely the American role in the world for years to come. There is nothing that justifies, let alone compels, the taking of such a great risk. Time is not working against us. It is Hussein who is being deprived of the income that constitutes the sole source of his means of maintaining a military establishment. And since that deprivation is the result of American naval power, it can be maintained as long as we need to maintain it.

It may be, of course, that economic sanctions cannot achieve the objectives the administration has set forth. But sanctions combined with military forces whose mission is the protection of Saudi Arabia are capable of preserving America's vital interests in the Gulf. These interests—the prevention of Iraq's domination of the region, along with continued access to the Gulf's oil at reasonable prices—can be achieved without forcing the Iraqis to vacate Kuwait. As long as the export embargo is maintained, our vital interests can be realized even if Iraq stays in Kuwait indefinitely. There remains the threat posed by Iraq's efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction: an entirely legitimate concern, it is one that in any scenario can best be answered by the United States extending a nuclear umbrella to Iraq's neighbors.

These considerations point to a clear conclusion. Calmly sitting things out—with a reduced land force—does not work against us. The opposite persuasion, that time is not on our side and that we must therefore act, is one that by now is entirely familiar. Those who argued it throughout the long years of the cold war are the same as those who urge it today. There is little reason for thinking they are any more prescient today than they were yesterday. •

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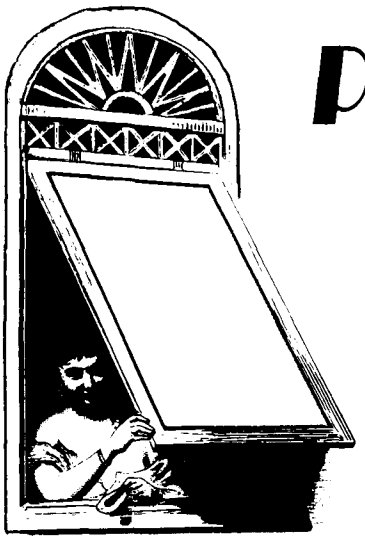

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Large-Scale Projects

Kevin Costner's career is doing fine. It's only five years since he first became truly visible in a minor but graphic role in *Silverado*, Laurence Kasdan's failed attempt at a Western. Subsequent films—*No Way Out*, *The Untouchables*, *Bull Durham*, *Field of Dreams*—have served Costner well. Now he is co-producer, director, and star of a three-hour-plus Western, **Dances with Wolves** (Orion), and it's something of an achievement.

Something. Unlike Kasdan, who stuck some modern glitz on a standard Western, Costner modeled his picture from the start on modern sensibility. There were always two categories of Westerns, the cowboy picture and the cavalry picture. Kasdan chose the former. Costner chose the latter—with a twist. He used a cavalry novel by Michael Blake about a Union Army officer assigned to the frontier who learns to know the Sioux and who, as they said, turned Indian. Thus it combines some John Ford elements of cavalry action with modern empathy for Native Americans.

Blake did the screenplay, and (two crucial points) Costner got Dean Selmer as cinematographer and Neil Travis as editor. Those colleagues have helped the novice director to produce a picture that holds us by what it shows even when it lags in what it tells.

Costner is a lieutenant whose right leg is hurt in a Tennessee battle in 1863. (He drags himself out of an Army field hospital to avoid amputation.) As a reward for courage under fire, he is given his choice of assignments and chooses the frontier. Out West, a deranged commander, who hates a hero on sight, assigns him to a lonely post in the vast Dakota territory. Costner arrives to find the little "fort" absolutely deserted.

He cleans up the tumbledown place and awaits reinforcements. And waits. He becomes friendly with a lone wolf who skulks around the place. He encounters a few visiting Sioux, who won't stop to talk. (They see him playing with the wolf, and this leads to his eventual Indian name, Dances with Wolves.) One night a herd of buffalo thunders past, and the next day he reports the herd to the Sioux village. In gratitude they take him on the hunt and virtually adopt him. In this village is—there has to be—a young widow who is actually white: she was kidnapped as a child. She serves first as translator for Costner, then as love interest.

Costner learns their language, lives among them, dresses like them. When they are about to move to their winter camp, he means to go with them, and he returns to his little fort only to pick up the journal he had been keeping. Now the reinforcements are there. He is arrested and is to be sent back East for trial as a traitor. Fighting follows, as the Sioux rescue him. Costner is on the Sioux side.

The film has a shaggy dog (wolf?) quality. Throughout, the long story has been moving toward a conflict: loyalty to one civilization or to another. Or: What will happen to Costner when the Army catches up with him? This conflict is left absolutely open at the end, with a vague hope for a happy ending to a hopeless situation.

Some questions. When the Sioux are about to be attacked by the Pawnee, Costner distributes Army rifles to his friends. Surely, for an Army officer, this is sympathy carried to an extreme? And how did his friends learn to shoot so quickly? For that matter, how does he learn to speak their language so quickly? And how, at the end, does he survive three tremendous clouts on the head with rifle butts when he is captured by soldiers?

In this last section, the film has to strain to keep Costner a hero and to cast the Army, which he has let down, as villains. Every one of the soldiers is made a loutish brute, so that when the Sioux rescue him, we understand why he helps his friends to kill soldiers. I have been pro-Indian ever since I saw Richard Dix in *The Vanishing American* in 1925, but some of this picture puts considerable strain on the soldier's oath.

Selmer's cinematography helps enormously. The real story starts quite far along in the film, but what we see as Costner journeys to his lonely post is so overwhelming that we almost don't care. Throughout the entire film, Selmer uses gorgeous landscapes as prodigally as a rajah uses pearls. Of course there are ridge shots, some of them with figures silhouetted against a setting sun. Of course most of the shots are done in early morning or late afternoon light, both golden and shadowy. But, without setting any new standards, Selmer keeps the look of *Dances with Wolves* up to the level of the best color work about the West.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

C'est la Vie. *Diane Kurys's humane, perceptive account of a French family's summer at a beach. Nothing much that's new, but a lot that's delicate—especially in Kurys's treatment of children. (Reviewed 12/3/90)* **The Nasty Girl**. *Michael Verhoeven directs cleverly—a touch too cleverly—this account of a young Bavarian woman's attempt to uncover her town's Nazi past. (11/26/90)* **Postcards from the Edge**. *Mike Nichols applies his pastry-chef lightness to this entertaining comedy-drama about a Hollywood daughter and mother—played by Meryl Streep and Shirley MacLaine. (10/8/90)* **Reversal of Fortune**. *Barbet Schroeder gives sizzle to this sometimes spacy dramatization of the von Bülow case. Ron Silver is Alan Dershowitz, fiercely ferreting. Jeremy Irons sustains the whole picture with his coldly elegant Claus. (11/19/90)* **—SK**

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As director, Costner has a fondness for foot shots—he likes to begin a sequence with a close-up of boots or hoofs. Beyond that, his only distinguishing marks so far are a feeling for great space and an ability to parse an event. The opening minutes in a Union Army camp are as good as anything in *Glory*; and the buffalo hunt, as edited by Travis, is a marvel. The note at the picture's end about the care taken not to injure animals makes the hunt even more of a technical marvel.

Costner as actor suffers here in a peculiar way. He uses voice-overs frequently, quotations from the lieutenant's journals, and his voice by itself is flat. But Costner complete is appealing, without being overpowering. Mary McDonnell is credible as the abductee, and the two most prominent Sioux, Rodney A. Grant and (I kid you not) Graham Greene, are stalwart.

Cyrano de Bergerac (Orion Classics) disappoints. As soon as I heard that Gérard Depardieu was making the film, I began to anticipate it, and what I read about it thereafter made me even more eager. The man who played the primal Danton, the subdued priest in *Under the Sun of Satan*, the hunchback in *Jean de Florette*, the irresistible thief in *Ménage*, seemed to be headed for Rostand's virtuosic hero as surely as Joan Sutherland once headed for Lucia. But in the first sequence of the film, we scent trouble, and the trouble worsens.

Depardieu plays the role with energy. Often in his astonishing career—in *The Last Woman*, for instance—he has used his sheer energy as his base, but he has built on it. Here he doesn't build: it's mostly energy all the way. I'd guess that he felt insecure in the part and grabbed what he could rely on, brio. During the first long sequence (the first act of the play, really), in which he drives a fat actor from a stage and fights a duel while he improvises a ballade, Depardieu shouts, without much color. Never does he show in his movement the equivalent of Cyrano's spiritual panache—physical grace. His gestures are clumsy. His arms saw. His fingers do not inscribe on the air. Depardieu strives and strives, but he never gets back there where Cyrano exists: a life of poetic conceit.

The director, Jean-Paul Rappeneau, has some sense of period complexity. (I was sometimes strongly reminded of Ariane Mnouchkine's *Molière*, with its wonderful seventeenth-century texture.) But Rappeneau, who has said that he depends on his ear, hasn't used it—or his eye—acutely with Depardieu. Anne Brochet, lovely in an unconventional way, is an intelligent actress who has a tough time with the rather silly Roxane. Jacques Weber, a noted Cyrano in his own right, makes the saturnine de Guiche comprehensible. •

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Goodbye To All That

BY ALAN RYAN

The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy by David Cannadine

(Yale University Press, 832 pp., $35)

It is said that the English love a Lord. The motto of David Cannadine's hefty tome is that they have a funny way of showing their affection. Between 1880 and 1980, the span of this study's account of their "Decline and Fall," the British aristocracy lost its political power, lost its place at the peak of the wealth pyramid, lost the land on which its wealth, status, and power had depended, and lost its role in setting the social tone of the whole of British society.

Some of these misfortunes were the side effect of changes nobody had foreseen and nobody could stop. Their loss of economic primacy stemmed from the long agricultural depression that began in the 1870s and lasted for almost seventy-five years. Meanwhile, the rise of American industry from the 1860s created a class of plutocrats who put even the wealthiest British landowner in the shade. Other misfortunes were the result of deliberate action. Sooner or later the basic conflict between a democratic electorate and a hereditary Upper House that felt free to disregard the electorate's will would have resulted in measures of the kind that the Parliament Act of 1911 pushed through, curbing the political power of the peers. In the event, the House of Lords committed political suicide when they rejected Lloyd George's "People's Budget" of 1909 and flouted the convention that the Lords did not tamper with money bills. That provoked Asquith's Liberal government to bar them from touching government finance, and to reduce drastically their ability to hold up other legislation.

Some of the aristocrats' misfortunes were, of course, a bit of both. It was the unforeseen and unwanted collapse of British agriculture in the last quarter of the nineteenth century that hit the landowning classes with falling rents and falling land values, but it was the will of Parliament that imposed new taxes, new death duties, and legislation designed to relieve the tenant farmer at the expense of his landlord. More frivolously, perhaps, new kinds of entertainment were not intended to make the aristocracy's pleasures seem old hat and boring—and yet they did, and the chorus girls who raided the country houses and the peers who raided the chorus line thereby mounted a more or less deliberate assault on traditional values. Cumulatively, these political, economic, and cultural changes spelled the death of the old order.

It's a story that can be told from innumerable perspectives. One is commercial, the perspective of *The New York Times* travel and leisure writers, the American Express travel brochures, and above all the British purveyors of "the national heritage." The British have an insatiable appetite for elegiac evocations of the country house scene, where time has been frozen at about four o'clock on a golden afternoon in the long Edwardian summer. This can be parlayed into endless books, calendars, pictorial tea trays, and all the other knickknacks of the "heritage" business. It says much for the basic optimism of the British that the purchasers should identify so much more readily with the vanished elite than with the underservants, footmen, gardeners, and stableboys that their grandparents would actually have been in that world.

Sterner spirits see matters in a class perspective. The departure of the British aristocracy is merely one more turn in a familiar cycle. Once landed wealth had ceased to dominate the scene, the aristocracy were redundant, and soon removed in the historical dustcart. In this light, British history is interesting for what did *not* happen. To put it coarsely, violent revolution on the European model did not take place. The dustcart of history is not, at least in England, a tumbril.

Nobody got guillotined. Certainly, in Ireland, and especially in the south, there was near war for much of the nineteenth century, and the aristocracy were driven off the land by violence, by rent strikes, and by politically sanctioned expropriation. Even after abandoning their estates, they were frequently driven out of their houses, too, by arson and threats of violence before and after the creation of the Irish Free State. That, however, was the exception. In mainland Britain, great estates were broken up, their owners were shoved aside by professional politicians, and they were often left broke as well as impotent. It all happened very quietly by the standards of continental Europe, let alone Russia.

There are many variations on the class war theme. One is a simple expression of relief at having abolished the hereditary right to live off the hard work of other people. There is an old and doubtless apocryphal story about the American immigration officer who looked at the landing form on which an English aristocrat had given his profession as "peer of the realm" and promptly changed it to "unemployed." The sentiment that inspired him was familiar enough in nineteenth-century Britain. The old radical tradition always mocked the landlording classes as those "who toiled not, neither did they spin," and looked forward to the day when, as Mill put it, there would be nobody "exempt from bearing their share of the necessary labor of human life, except those unable to labor, or who have fairly earned rest by previous toil." In that light, the fact that aristocrats have to earn their living is a victory for social justice, even if, according to Cannadine, it means that the countess of Mar is a British Telecom salesperson, and the earl of Pembroke a soft-porn film director.

Cannadine's capacious work finds room for all of these views. Though he is a famously tough and acerbic writer, he begins nervously. Eight-hundred pages on a declining breed raise some obvious questions about the author's interest in the subject. Is it lower-class *ressentiment* or upper-class complaint that drives him? Like all English intellectuals, Cannadine can place himself exactly: "As a lower-middle-class product of the Welfare State, educated at grammar school and Oxbridge, I come from a social group generally renowned for its conservatism, its deference, its loyalty to hierarchy, and its acquiescence in the status quo." But he insists that he is not writing an apologia for the Cecils and the Russells, the dukes of Dorset and Omnium, even of Bedford and Manchester. The point of writing history, says Cannadine, is precisely not to take your subjects at their own evaluation, not to see the world through their eyes, not to follow them in their illusions.

Among other things, he says, he is writing "in dissent from, and in protest against, the present craze for national heritage, which so often misrepresents the substance and seriousness of aristocratic existence." The post-World War II

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aristocracy may have had to open their houses to the public to keep a roof over their heads, and they may have had to pass themselves off as the custodians of the national heritage to secure government grants and assistance with the upkeep of their furniture and paintings; but much of this, for Cannadine, is faute de mieux. The ancestral collectors were often careless and philistine, and their descendants began to take an interest in the Chippendale and the Rubenses only when they had to.

But 800 pages would be a longish essay in pure skepticism. Cannadine's main aim is to paint a historical panorama of a social, economic, political, and cultural change that he thinks it quite apt to describe as a revolution. He declares himself against what J. H. Hexter called "tunnel history," the sort of specialized history that separates social history from economic history, the history of departments of state from the history of elections, and so minutely on. As he elegantly says of his own account, "The perspective that it offers on the aristocracy is unapologetically that of the parachutist, not the truffle hunter."

It is also a very political account. Trevelyan lightheartedly defined social history as "history with the politics left out," but Cannadine's brand of social history certainly wouldn't come under that umbrella. The politics is put back in with a vengeance, and anyone who really wants to chase the ins and outs of the aristocracy's loss of political influence in Britain can pursue his topic right down to the level of the reforms that drove landowners out of the county councils and the mayor's parlors of English county towns, and curl up with "Appendix E: Patrician Mayors of British Towns, 1880-1945."

Unlike many writers of similarly wide range, Cannadine seems not to have any particular ax to grind—at any rate, not beyond wanting to denounce the recent tendency to treat British history as a continuous process in which nothing very much ever happened. This makes for an enjoyable read, but for an oddly episodic book, in which it is not always clear what is being explained or what is doing the explaining. Cannadine admits at the outset that it is not very easy to define all his terms. The aristocracy shades off more or less imperceptibly into the gentry, and the gentry shades off, in turn, into the non-landed middle classes. To be a "landowner" covers a multitude of acres, from the duke of Sutherland's 1880 holdings of 1,358,545 acres of England and Scotland to the thousand acres of well-connected country parsons and other small landowners.

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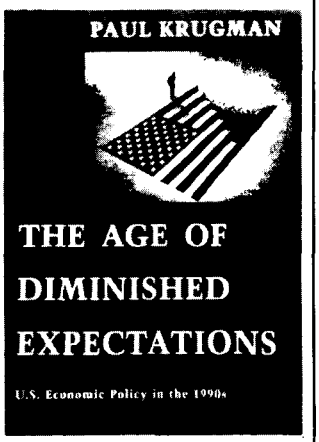

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Cannadine admits the difficulty, but he doesn't entirely help himself by using terms like "patrician" and (in a pretty idiosyncratic usage) "genteel" to cover anyone who has either a lot of land or some tolerably close relationship to a member of the nobility. It wouldn't matter if the terms never clouded the issues, but sometimes they do. Cannadine's obsession with landowning occasionally suggests that his real concern is with the political expression of landed economic interests, and he has written before on landlords and landlordism.

Anyone writing about "land and British politics," however, would want what Cannadine does not provide: an account of how the new owners of land once held by the well-connected defended their own interests as landowners. One thing that happened, of course, was that tenants who bought their land from their landlords formed the National Farmers Union and became a powerful lobby in the Tory Party. Conversely, anyone writing about "how the well-connected stay connected" would want a more elaborate account than Cannadine's about where the children and the nephews and nieces of the aristocracy fetched up once they were shut out of the Church, the Foreign Office, and the army. He touches on this, but too sketchily to disarm enthusiasts for the "continuity thesis," who are prone to claim that all the upper classes have done is switch from land to the City.

Within the history he does write, there are one or two awkward moments. Gladstone, for instance, features both as a "patrician" and as a non-patrician upper-middle-class threat to the patricians. Gladstone owned a large estate at Hawarden, and was wholly at ease in aristocratic circles, but he was equally a master of the electoral politics of an increasingly democratic country. On the first count, he was patrician; on the second, he was not. Gladstone was certainly as torn as anyone could be between his regard for tradition and his respect for the new forces of democracy, but we don't receive much illumination from the labeling.

Cannadine is excellent on the bleak economic narrative of decline. His taste for a faintly absurd linguistic exuberance that runs much to triadic formulations—the landowning class were "in decline, disarray, and dissolution," they were "under attack, on the defensive, and in retreat"—nicely counterpoints a taste for emphatically piled up statistics. Estates gone under the hammer read like the French casualty list after Agincourt; paintings fall into the hands of the Huntingdons, Wideners, and Mellons like autumn leaves; houses fall to the wrecker's ball. The sales of the Irish estates of the marquess of Bath, the duke of Abercorn, Sir Victor Brooke, the marquess of Leinster, Waterford, and the duke of Leinster are meticulously listed, with the acreages and prices involved, and later sales are added to the list. A convincing—and touching—ledger of loss accumulates.

One of the triumphs of the book is its insistence on dealing with the British, rather than the narrowly English, aristocracy. In that broader perspective, its treatment of Ireland is a particular success. The poverty of the Irish peasantry, and its resentment against landlords who were frequently absentee, and almost always of a different faith, had long suggested that a solution to one "Irish problem" was a government-assisted buyout of the landlords. Long before governments made any other serious inroads into laissez-faire, the Land Acts of 1870, 1881, and 1891 started down this road. Wyndham's Act in 1903 vastly accelerated the transfers, and the establishment of the Irish Free State finished the process. It was, as Cannadine says, a revolution:

> The combined effects of the British and Irish land legislation was that some 15 million out of 17 million acres were transferred from landlords to tenants, at a cost of £150 million in advances. In scale, this was land reform on a par with Bolshevik Russia: the hereditary owners, who had held the land for centuries, now held it no more.

On the peculiar politics of the aristocracy Cannadine is equally good, but less striking. For instance, when it comes to the House of Lords' battle with the Asquith government in 1909-11, Cannadine faces what amounts to unfair competition. Roy Jenkins's *Mr. Balfour's Poodle* told the story of bizarre romantics like Lord Willoughby de Broke so well that Cannadine's account inevitably feels somewhat secondhand. Willoughby de Broke's memoirs celebrated the "love between master and man" and the "gentleness" to be found on the hunting field; he attained his apotheosis in 1914 when he planned to prevent the passage of Asquith's Irish Home Rule Bill by leading a cavalry charge down Whitehall and arresting the prime minister. On this, too, Cannadine is very good, but he adds little to George Dangerfield's epic account in *The Strange Death of Liberal England.*

Still, to say only that much would be an injustice. For Cannadine's focus on the political allegiances and political fates of an almost endless stream of disenchanted "patricians" is distinctive, and at the very least it has the fascination of superior gossip. At its best, certainly, it has a great deal more to offer. Cannadine argues that the aristocratic domination of British politics could operate in a benign fashion so long as the aristocracy was an unthreatened ruling class. Until the last decades of the nineteenth century, both the Lords and their junior relations in the Commons split their allegiances between Whigs and Conservatives. This allowed steady reform to proceed within a generally liberal political climate.

The allegiance of the Whig magnates to reforming liberalism was increasingly strained by successive Reform Acts (which deprived them of their control over seats in the Commons), the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland (which involved something close to the confiscation of the Church's property and revenues), and the tendency of Liberal governments to side with tenants against their landlords (as when the Ground Game Act gave the tenant the rights over hares and rabbits that his landlord had previously enjoyed). After the great split in Liberalism caused by Gladstone's attempt to introduce Irish Home Rule in 1886, the House of Lords overwhelmingly became a Tory stronghold, and its alienation from reforming governments was almost complete.

At one level, this resulted in nothing more terrible than confirming the conservative bias of British politics. Balfour, indeed, foolishly believed that the Conservatives could govern Britain permanently. If they were unlucky enough to lose an election, Conservatives in the Commons had a permanent majority in the Lords that could block Liberal legislation and could always be used as a threat to persuade Liberals to come to essentially conservative terms. Pressing his luck too far, he finally provoked the showdown of 1911 that shifted power once and for all to the Commons.

But this left disgruntled and bitter patricians wondering what their country was coming to. Some embraced the politics of the very far right. Cannadine has an entertaining chapter on "the politics of paranoia," built perhaps too heavily on the preposterous Willoughby de Broke and the loopy Unity Mitford, but an interesting counterpoint to the American view that the politics of the radical right chiefly appeal to lower-middle-class sufferers from "status inconsistency." Others simply carried on serving in Conservative governments; there have been, after all, plenty of them, and until Thatcher's arrival they were hospitable to Devonshires and Salisburys and their assorted cousins and nephews.

Where Cannadine's touch fails him, oddly enough, is where his subjects

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turned left. Bertrand Russell, for instance, is treated as a class traitor who joined the Labour Party because his money had run out and he looked to politics to repair his fortunes. This is not so much false as weird. Russell inherited the equivalent of £1 million in 1980s money, which was quite enough to live on without doing a hand's turn. In fact, he looked forward to an academic life, and gave away most of his money to the London School of Economics, to Newnham College, to Alfred North Whitehead, and to many other good causes. Russell's politics in calm moments were always those of the radical liberalism of his father and his godfather (John Stuart Mill), and in his wilder moments he espoused an anarchism that Americans got from Randolph Bourne, but was no route to place or pelf.

Cannadine cheerfully agrees that the same family could produce divided results. "The Russells produced a diehard and a socialist, the Trevelyans a Labour minister and a Baldwinite Tory." Unity Mitford adored Hitler, Diana Mitford married Oswald Mosley, Nancy Mitford became a Labour voter, and Jessica Mitford briefly a Communist and thereafter an activist in the American civil rights movement. The trouble is that this all suggests that Cannadine's favorite variable—landed wealth—may explain a lot less than its prominent place in the book implies.

On one thing he is surely right. Maybe other writers are more struck by the fact that the patricians still have half their old estates than by the fact that they have lost half; more struck by the fact that half the largest fortunes in Britain are inherited than by the fact that half are not. But Cannadine is quite right to point out how little time modern Conservatism has for the patricians. Thatcher has humbled the Pyms and the Priors, has sent her victims to the House of Lords as a punishment, and has put her faith in the Tebbitts and the Majors of the world. Her meritocratic radicalism may or may not have been good for Britain, but it has dealt a death blow to the patrician Tory.

ALAN RYAN teaches politics at Princeton University and is the author of *Bertrand Russell: A Political Life* (Hill and Wang).

The Fire This Time

BY JUAN WILLIAMS

The Content of Our Character by Shelby Steele

(St. Martin's Press, 175 pp., $15.95)

In the middle of his "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," which was written in 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. took a surprising turn away from the debate about protest politics and found himself face-to-face with the monstrous psychological problem of being black in America: "When you see ominous clouds of inferiority begin to form in [your daughter's] little mental sky and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people. . . ," he wrote to Birmingham businessmen who were asking him to delay his protest:

> when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro living constantly at tiptoe stance, never knowing what to expect next and are plagued by inner fears and outer resentments . . . then you will understand why it is so difficult to wait.

King's pained passage reveals a good deal about the urgent need that black people feel to find relief from the maddening inner pressure of being black in America. His words offer a rare window on the psychological dimension of the politics of black America. That aspect of racial discrimination has been generally reserved for literature, has been studied primarily in the works of writers such as Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, and Alice Walker. The terror of being inside Bigger Thomas's violent, uneducated, and confused mind, as portrayed in *Native Son*; the pain of being ignored by the white world, as shown in *Invisible Man*; the sadness of a wife abused by a husband who is frustrated with his lot as a black man, as conveyed in *The Color Purple*: the heat and the hardship of black inner life have been probed and unleashed only in fiction, far away from the fireworks of American politics.

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psychological considerations has continued during the last thirty years. The cardinal rule of black political etiquette—enforced by advocates of Black Power in the 1960s and by racial separatists like the Nation of Islam today—is to keep the doubts, the alienation, the diabolical questions about self-worth far away from the public debate over race. Instead, what is intentionally revealed is a single-minded focus on one emotion only, the rage that black people feel about discrimination by white people.

Sometimes rage is a useful emotion. It was essential, certainly, in generating the will to stand up to Bull Connor's police dogs in Birmingham. But now the dogs are gone. The laws of segregation have been broken by the civil rights movement. Yet the rage lives on, and it is one of the constant features of the politics of black America. The durability of this emotion prompts the suspicion that there is more going on than mere screaming. Shelby Steele's aim is to get behind the scream, to look at the links between black psychology and black politics. Both are highly volatile subjects, and Steele brings them into dangerous proximity in his important book.

Steele is married to a clinical psychologist and credits her with assisting with every page. It shows: his book reads a little like a collection of therapy sessions for Mrs. Steele's husband. He does a good job as a stand-in for the educated, self-critical black American mind in 1990. He grew up poor and has made his way into middle-class American life, a journey that many black Americans have made over the last thirty years. It is that experience and its lessons, he implicitly argues, that are most in need of scrutiny now, for those who have arrived and for those who haven't. Steele puts the white American mind, at least in the matter of race, on the couch, too, though the thoughts of Mrs. Steele, who is white, are not made explicit in the book.

It is not surprising that Steele, in his search for the ragged psychological realities of race in America, finds lies and evasions in abundance. Two basic lies stand out: the white insistence on being innocent of the nation's history of racism and the black insistence on continuing to be a victim. Steele's conclusion is that "the barriers to black progress in America today are clearly as much psychological as they are social or economic."

The problem with a psychological analysis is that it may lack historical perspective. The fear of inferiority that undoubtedly afflicts too many black souls is a psychological issue, obviously; but it is also a consequence of the past. It is the result of centuries of whites belittling blacks, vilifying blacks, denying blacks educational and economic opportunities. Steele addresses the history of slavery and segregation rather glibly. He advises blacks only to forget it. "Our memory of oppression has such power, magnitude, depth, and nuance that it constantly drains our best resources." And later he adds: "Our memory makes us like the man who wears a heavy winter coat in springtime because he was frostbitten in winter."

Steele is making an argument for a kind of denial. He wants black people to look away from the painful past, because to look at history is to look "backward rather than forward, outward rather than inward, so that possibilities for development—education, economic initiative, job training, etc.—are only seen out of the corner of the backward looking eye." But surely it is dangerous to forget history—especially when dealing with psychology, even more when dealing with politics. It seems self-evident, or so it should seem, that history holds important lessons. Too many Americans, however, are anxious to forget history, particularly when it comes to race. There is a reason, after all, that black Americans are disproportionately poor and ill-educated, and the reason is a history of racism.

Too many students of contemporary black America, and too many policymakers, conservative and liberal, have concluded that its problems are completely the result of the social values that now prevail and have led to a breakdown of family life. They fail to acknowledge the responsibility of a nation that has throughout its history set people at a disadvantage on the basis of their race. And blacks, too, sometimes seem selective in their memory; too many black leaders talk about the current problems as if racism is worse than it has ever been. They deny the amazing progress that America has made in the fight against a history of racism.

By encouraging a flight from history, Steele has made a possibly deadly mistake. He invites his critics to dismiss him as a pawn of those conservatives who insist that whites have no responsibility for the sad state of black America because racial discrimination has been outlawed. Moreover, Steele's failure to deal with history weakens his argument by encouraging the kind of distortion that he opposes in others who maintain that *only* history matters: you can't favor some evasions while condemning others. Steele's own evasion blinds him to the plausible grounds for affirmative action; without a knowledge of the past, there is no rationale for companies to seek out qualified minorities for jobs, because there is no history of whites excluding qualified people on the basis of gender and race.

Still, the damage to Steele's argument is not fatal, because he is surely right to argue that the obsessive focus of some whites and blacks on the past only perpetuates the problems of the past. Certainly it fails to illuminate the contemporary racial situation, in which a new level of opportunity for black Americans has not been consistently met by new levels of achievement by black Americans. A fixation on history allowed both the Reagan Justice Department and the civil rights establishment, fighting on opposite sides of an affirmative action argument, to invoke Martin Luther King's famous exhortation to judge individuals by the content of their character, not their skin color. The Reaganites used King to support their fight against court-imposed consent decrees that ordered local fire departments with a history of discriminating against blacks and women to hire them in significant numbers. The same line was invoked by civil rights lawyers in defense of the idea that blacks and women had to be hired to make recompense for past discriminatory practices.

This double-talk, Steele rightly thinks, amounts to a competition for historical vindication, a contest for innocence:

> I think the racial struggle in America has always been primarily a struggle for innocence. White racism from the beginning has been a claim of white innocence and therefore of white entitlement to subjugate blacks. . . . Blacks used the innocence that grew out of their long subjugation to seize more power. . . . The inferiority of the black always makes the white man superior; the evil might of the white man makes blacks good. This pattern means that both races have a hidden investment in racism and racial disharmony.

He adduces political figures like Reagan, who claimed to be "colorblind" in all racial matters, and argues persuasively that that claim allowed him to feign innocence about the problems caused by racism, and to make blacks feel guilty of seeking unfair advantage on the basis of their skin color. For Reagan, blacks are guilty and whites are innocent. For Jesse Jackson, by contrast, blacks are innocent, and the proper (that is, the 1960s) formula for achieving power is to insist that blacks never lose touch with their "status as a victim." Such a crippled self-image helps arrange for mass protests, but it also suggests to the black man or woman

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that individual improvement is out of reach.

Just twenty-six years after the monumental achievement of the Civil Rights Act, and twenty-five years after the Voting Rights Act, both accomplished with the help of mass protest, Steele is calling for an end to the celebration of the protest strategy. The war against legal discrimination has been won, he says, and he is correct. The struggle to form black Americans into an educated and economically strong group, however, still continues, and mass protest cannot teach a child to read or instill work habits in a teenager. Steele advocates a strategy of individual accomplishment, whose cumulative effect will be a transformation of the social and economic situation of American blacks.

Steele's optimistic judgment that America's laws are now race-neutral, and that most whites are not racists, runs the risk of being scorned by fatalists and cynics. But he stands his ground well. He argues persuasively that there may be bumps and falls along the way, there may be self-doubt and negative stereotypes, but a black person with drive, talent, and confidence can make his way in America. This is a radical message for many black leaders today, who seem almost glad to come upon racist statements and racist acts as more evidence that America remains an intractably prejudiced nation in which blacks cannot advance on their own. For all their differences, the leaders of the NAACP and the Nation of Islam are united in their effort to make whites feel more and more that they owe blacks a special consideration; lately there has even been a resurgence of interest among some in the forty-acres-and-a-mule type of reparations. Steele believes that this regressive black view nicely suits racist whites, who view themselves as superior people charged with the onerous responsibility of caring for inferior people, that is, for blacks.

There are more opportunities for black people than ever before, but there is a large group of blacks still mired in poverty and despair: that is the political and psychological puzzle at the heart of Steele's work. Steele insists that after the breakdown of segregation, blacks cannot be absolved of some accountability for their predicament. "Much of the problem must be of our own making." But many blacks will not admit this, Steele writes, because it "would cause us to lose the innocence we derive from our victimization . . . and jeopardize the entitlement (social programs and affirmative action)" that blacks insist society offer them. Consequently, the political culture of contemporary black America has a "hidden investment in victimization and poverty," which is its basis for making demands on whites. For Steele, the "tragedy of black power in America today" is that it is " a victim's power."

Taking pride in being weak, ignorant, and in need of a handout may get you an equal rights bill or a couple of quarters from passers-by, but it will not achieve equality in education and accomplishment for a race of people. Steele is arguing for a new goal: higher numbers of educated black people who can compete on equal ground with well-educated whites in academia, business, and in government. Steele's prescription might be called earned equality, which is something that goes beyond the legislated equality of the 1960s.

He is urging individuals, black and white, to take race relations to the next phase of the struggle for equality. For blacks, the way out of their part of the psychological trap, according to Steele, is to move into the American mainstream on the basis of individual achievement through hard work. For whites, the key to escaping from the psychological trap is to end condescending acts of generosity, such as affirmative action, when the generosity

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does not grow out of respect for intelligence and ability but out of racial guilt.

Though Steele's work is clearly heretical in the current church of black politics, he has plenty of company in black American history. As one critic has observed, "The notion that blacks must take responsibility for their own lives goes back at least as far as 1829, when David Walker published his 'Appeal' urging blacks to rebel against slavery." Walker urged blacks to flee slavery at the risk of death, because freedom had to be won by individual action, and not by waiting for government decree. Booker T. Washington insisted that blacks get started educating their children and working their own farms to establish their freedom. Frederick Douglass called for black Americans to focus on family and to adopt working-class values to establish their political and social credentials as American citizens. W. E. B. DuBois wrote about the need for blacks to liberate themselves from whites through displays of individual achievement that would establish their claim to power. Marcus Garvey's movement was based on the idea of blacks working and saving to set a course for themselves separate from whites. And Martin Luther King Jr. spoke repeatedly about the need for black responsibility as a part of the drive for black freedom.

Where Steele breaks with that tradition, or rather, where he significantly adds to it, is in his notion that black people have come, through a psychological contortion, to see black achievers as less than truly black. Individual achievement has lost its moral glamour in the black world. Black students who get high grades are disparaged as "acting white." The black middle class is put down as "assimilationist." And so on. The objective of this posture is to keep whites guilty, so they will continue to make redress for the wrongs that they have done. Every black man has to surrender his individual will, ability, and success, and hang his head as another example of the white man's victim. Such a psychology, Steele argues soundly, encourages blacks to see themselves as impotent and inferior. Steele writes out of an unimpeachable pride in his own intelligence, experience, and achievements, and it is precisely his pride as a black man that compels him to single out the defeatist mentality, the negative psychology, at the forefront of the black American struggle today.

Steele's message has provoked a predictable rush of criticism. Patricia J. Williams, a law professor writing in *The New York Times*, said that Steele's psychological models do not "adequately address the complex reinforcements of group behavior" that are responsible for racism, and mocked Steele's attention to the need for hard work, family values, and education as a prescription that will lead blacks into "the J. Crew Family of man, upper-middle-class, attractively if predictably attired, polished rather than folksy." Steele's is a "colonizing vision," she concluded. Roger Wilkins told *The Washington Post* that Steele's work is an "ahistorical analysis," and is blind to America's responsibility for being a "racist society that is tilted against [black people]." William Julius Wilson told the *Post* that Steele's work is a "one-sided, individualistic explanation of black behavior that unfortunately reinforces the dominant American ideology that the poor are somehow responsible for their own plight."

The implication of all this criticism is that Steele has given comfort to whites, by freeing them of responsibility for a history of legal segregation that is at the root of many of the problems facing black people today. But in a nation in which the black middle class has grown rapidly in response to newly available opportunities, the view that racism is as fierce as ever was suspect long before Steele came on the scene. Promoting that position has been an act of intellectual dishonesty, and it has had the practical result of severely undercutting the credibility of many black leaders and thinkers.

Thanks to the lies of Tawana Brawley and her supporters, the mockery of the white Central Park rape victim, the enthusiasm for conspiracy theories about whites and Jews spreading drugs and AIDS in the black community, there is now a huge and corrosive gap between the "blame whitey" message from black spokesmen like Jackson and Al Sharpton and the reality of flawed but improving race relations that most blacks and whites see in their everyday lives. Sharpton and his ilk, those who cry racism at every opportunity and make wild demands, get the attention of the television cameras and of the white and black press. The media prefer telegenic protest and quotable rhetoric to the day-to-day work of encouraging schoolchildren, registering voters, and lobbying politicians.

To argue, against Steele, that a middle-class life of education, hard work, and family amounts to a problematic, even a colonizing, vision is the height of arrogance. It is a criticism born of indifference to poor people, black or white, who would be willing, I have no doubt, to risk some contamination from the mainstream for the sake of lives filled with the opportunity to learn, to prosper, and to provide security for people they love. To argue that black America need not attend to the psychological aspects of its existence because there is still racism abroad in the land is no less condescending. It is an expression of a terrifying lack of faith in black Americans. It is a call for stasis.

Who can any longer doubt that new solutions are needed for new problems? In the last decade of the twentieth century, the role of black people in American society is changing as Hispanics grow in numbers and are fast becoming equal to blacks in their demands on the nation's attention and resources. The black claim on affirmative action, for example, is diluted as the Hispanic claim grows. And even among blacks the race issue is receding, as tensions grow between blacks who are being left behind—sometimes literally, in big-city black ghettos—and blacks who are taking advantage of new opportunities to move up the economic ladder and move out to the better neighborhoods. But the discussion among black people, especially among black leaders, has yet to adjust to these changes.

For all the flaws in Steele's thesis, he has addressed the real problems, and offered a new approach in thinking about them:

> Certainly there is still racial discrimination in America, but I believe that the unconscious replaying of our oppression is now the greatest barrier to our full equality. . . . I think black Americans today are more oppressed by doubt than by racism. . . . [N]owhere in the current black identity is there a strong theme of responsibility for our own fate, nor are there positive themes that define our character as a people or highlight our many strengths.

That is a powerful message. Again, it is steeped in a tradition of belief in the abilities of black people, once they are free, to use their gifts. It puts the aging black leadership of the NAACP and the Urban League, both organizations that have lost their direction, on the spot. It puts separatist leaders like Farrakhan, with their fantasies about blacks-only schools, blacks-only jobs, blacks-only neighborhoods, on the spot. It puts black elected officials, with their excuses for failing to do more to help poor blacks, on the spot. It puts whites who have lost faith in the idea that blacks can compete on an equal basis with whites on the spot. Unlike all of them, Shelby Steele has an idea.

JUAN WILLIAMS is a national political correspondent for *The Washington Post*.

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The Magical Muse

By Denis Donoghue

Haroun and the Sea of Stories by Salman Rushdie

(Granta Books/Viking, 211 pp., $18.95)

Salman Rushdie's new book is a story for children that began as a bedtime story for one child, Rushdie's son. The epigraph reads:

> Z embla, Zenda, Xanadu:
> A ll our dream-worlds may come true.
> F airy lands are fearsome too.
> A s I wander far from view
> R ead, and bring me home to you.

I assume that the space between the first letter of each line and what follows sets off the name Zafar for special affection. Like "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," the verses make a charm as well as a jingle, and they come to rest on the cherished monosyllable, "you." Like a message in a bottle dispatched on the sea, the book meant for one privileged recipient may be found by anyone.

I should not intrude on the author's privacy, even to the extent of finding in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* an acutely personal impulsion. For all I know, the book may be a disguised or displaced autobiography. Certain passages seem to point beyond their local bearing, as if they could a further tale unfold, were they so minded. The overt story is about the suppression of stories; or rather, of the storytelling capacity. The chief villain wants to control the world, "your world, my world, all worlds," as he tells the hero, Haroun: "And inside every single story, inside every Stream in the Ocean, there lies a world, a story-world, that I cannot Rule at all."

As for this particular story: Haroun, only son of the professional storyteller Rashid Khalifa—known to his admirers as Rashid the Ocean of Notions, and to his rivals as the Shah of Blah—comes home one day to find that his mother, Soraya, has run off with their neighbor Mr. Sengupta. The usurper is a man of no account, but he has beguiled Soraya by saying over and over again: "What's the use of stories that aren't even true?" Poor Rashid loses not only his wife but also the power of telling stories.

Haroun determines to see that his father's gift is restored to him. In the course of his knightly quest he comes upon two gangsters, a stammering speed-demon bus driver named Butt, a houseboat in the shape of a swan called *Arabian Nights Plus One*, a water genie named Iff from the Ocean of the Streams of Story, a bottle of Wish Water, a Floating Gardener called Mali, Plentimaw Fish who travel in pairs and speak in rhyme, one Prince Bolo, the Princess Batcheat (abducted for most of the book's time), Walrus Chief of Eggheads, Mudra the Shadow Warrior, a female page named Blabbermouth, and sundry other folk. Worst of the lot is a figure called Khattam-Shud, well known to Rashid as "the Arch-Enemy of all Stories, even of Language itself":

> He is the Prince of Silence and the Foe of Speech. And because everything ends, because dreams end, stories end, life ends, at the finish of everything we use his name. "It's finished," we tell one another, "it's over. Khattam-Shud: The End."

A hundred pages or so later Haroun meets Khattam-Shud, and finds him just as obnoxious as Rashid's account of him indicates. But it is clear by this time that it is not yet the End, that the name Khattam-Shud need not yet be uttered.

Haroun and the Sea of Stories alludes to, and therefore pays tribute to, many accredited stories and collections of stories, notably *One Thousand and One Nights* and the third book of *Gulliver's Travels*. There is much talk of Jason and the Golden Fleece. There are also allusions, unless I err, to several of Rushdie's own books, most clearly to the passage in *Shame* in which the narrator, long before *The Satanic Verses*, pronounces somewhat harshly upon "so-called Islamic fundamentalism" and goes on to assert that "religions shore up dictators by encircling them with words of power, words which the people are reluctant to see discredited."

The narrator proposes to replace the old myth by a new one, indeed by three such myths, "all available from stock at short notice: liberty; equality; fraternity." Nobody in *Shame* is given the task of remarking that these words, too, are words of power, and that even if the people are reluctant to see them discredited, these words have not delivered the uni-

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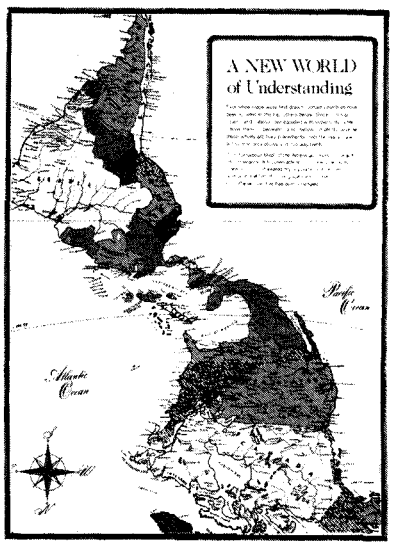

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versal happiness they promised.

I hope it is not eccentric of me to recall that passage from *Shame* and to think of it when Haroun finally reaches Gup City and observes that the Guppees are extraordinarily thin and dressed in rectangular garments covered in writing. These persons are, as Iff explains, "the famous Pages of Gup; that is to say, the army." To be more specific:

> Ordinary armies are made up of platoons and regiments and such like; our Pages are organized into Chapters and Volumes. Each Volume is headed by a Front, or Title, Page; and up there is the leader of the entire "Library," which is our name for the army—General Kitab himself.

What emerges from these Pages of Gup is odd indeed, a political theory undreamed of in the better commonwealths. In Gup there may be criticism, argumentation, loose talk, but not a story in sight. Still, words of power are spoken. But in Khattam-Shud's dark city of Chup, to make matters worse, the laws forbid speech and poison every story in the ocean.

There is something for everybody in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, as there should be. A child may read it and wonder that so much could happen to the boy Haroun, including something dreadful that happened one morning at eleven o'clock and left poor Haroun unable to keep his mind on anything for more than eleven minutes and, in many considerations, unable to go beyond it to any noon of decision. The same child may be troubled by the poisonous air of Gup City, and fear for Haroun's security there. Fairy lands are fearsome, too. An adult reader will wonder from time to time whether he is caught up in an allegory, thinking perhaps that the meaning of the book doesn't coincide with its events at every point, but is to be found at a distance from them.

No matter. None of these questions arises while one is reading the book, but only later, thinking about it. Walter Benjamin once distinguished between the novel and the story. The story, he suggested, comes from oral tradition and goes back to it, bringing the wisdom of faraway places and the lore of the sea; the novel is a function of the printing press and presupposes a private reader by himself in a room. The distinction could easily be made invidious, and Benjamin needed an extreme exemplar of storytelling, Nikolai Leskov, to make the distinction at all persuasive. But it is fitting that Rushdie makes the boy hero of his book the only son of a storyteller, and that he sends the boy running off to Gup City to interview the Walrus and persuade him to restore the narrative water-supply to his father Rashid. Heart-mysteries there.

What's the use of stories that aren't even true? Benjamin thought that their use was to convey wisdom rather than information; wisdom, the deep truth learned and passed on by word of mouth, information merely the small change of commerce, the unpretty pass we have come to. Another invidious distinction, you may say, issuing from a praiser of gone times. But there are episodes in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* that make the distinction seem at least possibly valid; like the business with "eleven" I've mentioned, which seems to come from ancestral lore and to return to it. And the prowess of Mali the Floating Gardener, for whom the lilac serves as a mouth. Benjamin thought that storytelling was nearly a lost art, that few people nowadays have communicable experience. If so, Rushdie is one of the few. It may be that he's an even better storyteller than a novelist. But that's another question, and meanwhile he has given us, and given his son, a gorgeous story with the happiest of endings.

DENIS DONOGHUE is the author, most recently, of *Warrenpoint* (Knopf).

The Age Of The Manager

BY DAVID S. LANDES

Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism by Alfred D. Chandler Jr., with the assistance of Takashi Hikino

(Harvard University Press, 860 pp., $35)

Making America Corporate, 1870-1920 by Olivier Zunz

(University of Chicago Press, 278 pp., $24.95)

In 1977 Alfred Chandler brought out a book, since become a classic, with the wonderfully evocative title *The Visible Hand*. The allusion was to Adam Smith's "invisible hand," that unintentionally provident mix of innumerable individual initiatives combining in the marketplace to promote optimum collective economic outcomes. Chandler's visible hand was anything but unintentional. It was the new managerial capitalism, invented in the nineteenth century to deal with increasing returns to scale—that is, savings that come with size and the consequent growth of the business unit—that had taken "the place of market mechanisms in coordinating the activities of the economy and allocating its resources." Modern business enterprise, noted Chandler, is necessarily bureaucratic. It comprises "many distinct operating units"; and if these are to work effectively as part of a whole, it needs hierarchical management, standardization of procedures, quantification of norms.

This management is properly professional. It should ideally be composed of people who possess, by training and by experience, the appropriate technical skills to understand and to direct the business of the enterprise, actual and potential. More often than not, given the corporate structure of the business unit, it will not be management that owns the business. Ownership will be in the hands of shareholders, whether few or many, and these shareholders will want to leave the management to those who know how to manage. In their own interest: business is too important to leave to owners, who cannot be expected really to understand what the business is about. Owners will and properly should vote the wishes of management, and they express this acquiescence by giving away their votes: they mail in their proxies.

Even when the owners are themselves experienced businessmen, their freedom to dispose of their property may be curtailed in favor of management, as in Massachusetts, where the state legislature recently rushed through a law designed to prevent shareholders from replacing more than one-third of the directors in any given year. This bill was considered in committee, reported out, voted, and signed all in two days, which probably could not have been done for a resolution in favor of motherhood or kindness to animals—and this in a state that can-

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not pass any kind of tax bill even though its continuing budget deficit gives it the lowest credit rating in the Union and is costing it millions in interest. The overt aim of the anti-takeover act was to prevent a bunch of Brits (with the typically non-specific company name of BTR), those immemorial enemies of Puritan and Irish New England, from taking control of good old Norton Company, manufacturer of ceramics and abrasives and true-grit contributor to local causes in Worcester, Massachusetts. This was the kind of issue that united everyone, Republicans and Democrats, WASPs and ethnics, management and labor (which feared large-scale firings in the name of productivity and profits), and a governor who has lately garnered nothing but brickbats and was eager to hear some applause. In the process, ownership and its immemorial rights took a beating.

Chandler is not the inventor of the theme of the managerial revolution, which goes back to the legal-institutional studies of Adolf A. Berle and Gardiner Means in the interwar years and to the book of that title by James Burnham in 1941. But whereas these forerunners were preoccupied and in some ways troubled by the social and political consequences of this transfer of power, Chandler, following on and developing the work of Thomas Cochran on the organization of American railway enterprise in the nineteenth century, has focused on the positive consequences of organized competence for operational control and industrial growth.

The Visible Hand, as its subtitle *The Managerial Revolution in American Business* indicates, dealt almost exclusively with the American story. The few passing allusions to European practice noted that Britain and France were slower to move to managerial capitalism, that "entrepreneurial enterprise and with it family capitalism continued to flourish"; and that in Germany, the power of the banks was such that "managers continued to share top management decisions with financiers." Now, in his new book, Chandler has deliberately set out to tell his story as a comparison of practice in the United States and Europe, specifically Britain and Germany, from the late nineteenth century to World War II.

We have here, industry by industry, firm by firm, an invaluable review of the structuring of the major branches of production during the first three-quarters of this century and of the links between structure and market success. Chandler and Takashi Hikino have been exemplary in their coverage, which will make the book a standard reference work, an indispensable part of any library of business history.

It is also a vade mecum to managerial practice, a survey of success and failure. Chandler notes in general the special advantages of first-comers (the pioneers of new-style management)—hard to meet and beat once installed. He also considers the sources of successful competition, which he finds not so much in the "we try harder" phenomenon, in efforts by second-best to catch up—although there are plenty of instances of belated but effective emulation—as in the rise of foreign, initially sheltered rivals. So in petroleum (Royal Dutch Shell vs. Standard Oil); or rubber (Dunlop vs. Goodyear and Firestone); or glass (Pilkington vs. Libby-Owen and Corning); and so on. And then there is the niche phenomenon—the company that comes up with something new and wins itself a place alongside and in symbiosis with the giants: thus Robert Bosch, maker of ignition systems for internal combustion engines and fellow traveler of the automobile industry; or 3-M (Minnesota Mining & Manufacturing), devisers and makers of special-purpose abrasives and tapes, ditto. These inevitably find that they have to emulate the managerial structures of their predecessors: it is not easy to compete with, or to resist, the hungry eyes of bigger units without learning their ways. The overall picture is one of market domination by the few with the resources and the know-how to take advantage of scale and scope.

The discussion of scope is the most suggestive part of the book. Economies of scale are an old story, but we have had less work on the significance of new technologies for economies of joint production, or scope. Economies of scope are those characteristics of the industrial process that make it convenient and

The Women Without Asking

were laying Grandfather on the living room
carpet. The reunion was carried
into other rooms, and he
was left with the lions of sunlight. Outside,
the men and boys scrabbled at a row
of five salvaged chessboards while
the lake lifted the drowned mayflies up into
rings around the dock pilings. She would
never bring it up, but now
with him napping, Grandmother hoped—expected—
them to ask for a reading from her
life-story, which she would send
for modestly from her purse in the car. She
imagined everyone well-behaved,
perhaps even on the floor,
as she read. But the men were being selfish,
and in fact now the women had come
looking to fold up chairs near
the match, their ire at the old man suddenly
fixed on those unintelligible
tabulae of tin, vinyl,
and cardboard. When the breeze swatted a pawn down
to the acorns the men's nonchalance
proved the women entirely
righteous, and the men were ordered to clean up,
for the hosts had things to get on with.
So the day broke up early.
While the sparrows dragged a tattered cob of sweetcorn
along the grass, the old man was raised,
chair and all, into a van.
Back in his room, the nurses pulled the curtains
on the sun lions, which had followed
and pressed now against the screens.

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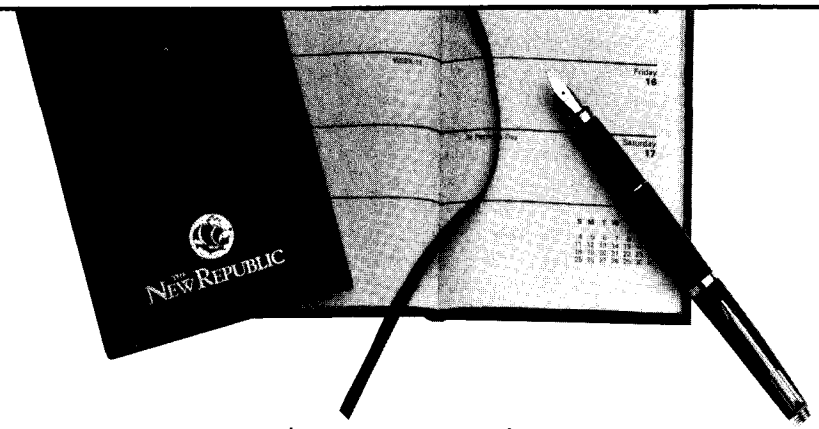

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cheap to move from one product to another because they use similar components and are made in similar ways. Thus the same companies that produced kerosene could also manufacture other petroleum derivatives, just as the German makers of coal-tar dyes found it easy to move into pharmaceuticals using organic materials and the same chemical know-how. With the coming of electricity, the makers of one kind of appliance or tool found it easy to manufacture others; and, to take the story up to the present, this diversification in kind was further encouraged by the transistor revolution and the integrated circuit. It is no accident that some of the most successful Japanese quartz-watch manufacturers began with the production of calculators and similar devices; or that Seiko (now Seiko-Epson), which began in timekeepers, has moved into microcomputers and accessories.

To speak of Japan and the electronics revolution is to fix on what is surely the greatest shortcoming in this otherwise far-reaching work. Too much has happened since 1940, and it is the characteristic of important books to whet the appetite. To be sure, Chandler promises a sequel, and by way of appetizer, he offers us here a valuable epilogue dealing with management in the postwar world. This shows important and sometimes disquieting differences in national patterns: the United States may have invented the managerial revolution, but Germany and Japan now use it better. In particular, American and British businessmen have learned to make more money faster by playing a kind of industrial board game—by buying and selling companies and pieces of companies rather than building them. Not a good sign.

But this epilogue is an afterthought, and we need to learn more. After all, as any investor knows, business performance varies. Structure and hierarchy may be a necessary condition of large-scale operation, but they are not an open sesame to success. Chandler does less with that than he should. His encyclopedic array of illustrative case studies is full of examples of success and failure, but short on reasons. Sometimes it would seem that personal virtues and shortcomings made a difference: people still matter, and we do not see enough of them here. Sometimes failure seems to be linked to a loss of creativity, which raises the interesting question whether bureaucratic structures are not hostile to novelty and inherently clumsy in innovation. Answer: some are and some aren't. It would be useful to know more about why.

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What about bigness? Maybe size in itself is inimical to creativity and adaptability. Big organizations generate nightmarish accumulations of protocol and paper. Every once in a while, a new technology—computers, for example—rescues enterprises from drowning in their own waste. But is there perhaps some intrinsic morbidity or languor in growth—what Weber might have described as routinization—as there is in aging? Are they two aspects of the same process? Can one postpone the inevitable but not thwart it? Again, Chandler does not consider the question, although he surely has much wisdom to dispense on the subject.

In this regard as in others, Olivier Zunz's study of corporate culture offers not so much a contrast as a valuable complement. Zunz is a historian with a novelist's eye; he tells us about small things as well as big, because he wants to see the universe in a grain of sand. When he talks about a business enterprise, he describes the people as well as their activities, their relatives and political connections, the physical environment as well as the technology they work with and the market they work in. You want to know what it means to bureaucratize a company and establish strict chains of command? Here is E. S. Rice, general agent for the E. I. Du Pont de Nemours Powder Company. Rice was enterprising, alert to new techniques (he notes with pleasure in 1888 that headquarters in Delaware has finally gone over to using the typewriter), able to operate without supervision, and successful both in selling and in negotiating for concessionary rates from the railway companies that moved Du Pont products.

But once the company went over to a more hierarchical, centralized mode of control, Rice's days as a free agent were numbered. He found himself bypassed by other company representatives; was told in no uncertain terms that "your office in Chicago will be entrusted with just so much of our business as we think you can best handle"; was asked by an auditor to justify small items of expense connected with the local police department and sundry political campaigns; then further asked to justify some $83 expended by his presumably well-meaning sister, subagent in Springfield, largely to assist sick and bereaved families of mining customers. (Accountants detest miscellaneous, unitemized expenditures, however small.) In the end, Rice resigned. "Given his background," Zunz tells us, "he quite naturally viewed the creation of an integrated, centralized sales department as an affront to his personal and business integrity and failed to grasp its necessity."

Zunz's focus is as much on these middle- and lower-rank managers and agents as on the builders and the bosses of corporate America. Zunz devotes a large chapter, for example, to the salesmen who moved the products: marketing seen from below. He follows these "drummers" on their wearying peregrinations—city to town, hotel to inn, restaurant to station diner. He tells us of their clothing—oh, that telltale brown suit! The bosses wore dark blue and gray. Higher management made efforts to get them to dress soberly: "You are well dressed when no one can remember anything you are wearing.... Noisy dress has kept many a man from hearing a sales argument." Also of the campaign to teach them thrift, the better to pay them less; here is advice in 1921 by C. W. Phellis, general director of sales at Du Pont and himself risen from drummer ranks:

> Walking is healthful.... In fact hiking along a few miles of railroad ties from one customer's location to another frequently afforded me an opportunity to construct my best sales arguments.... An every night room with bath is not necessary to health and happiness. I have taken many a sponge bath from wash bowl and pitcher, with satisfactory results.

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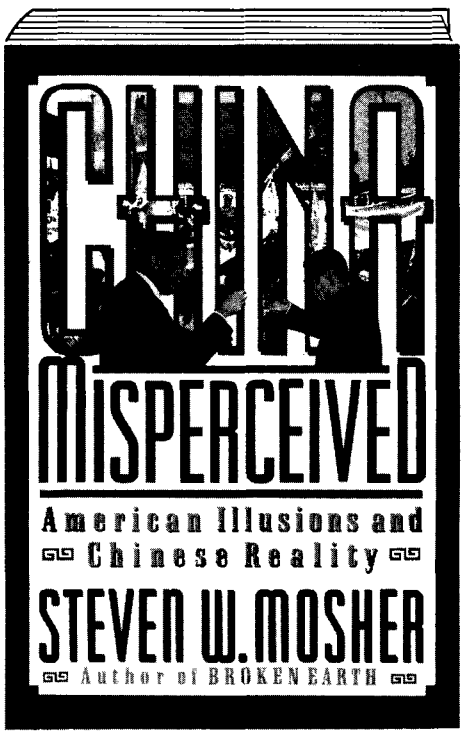

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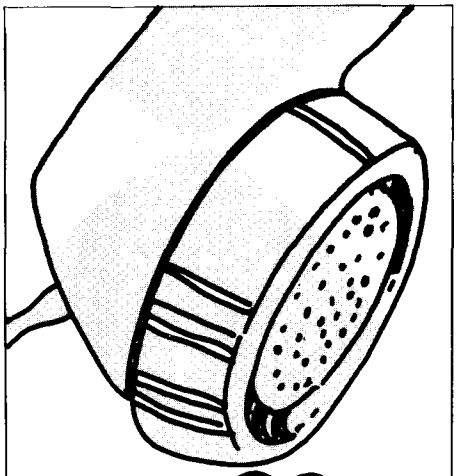

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(I am reminded of a comment of Abbott Lawrence Lowell, scion of two Boston business dynasties and president of Harvard, about the undergraduates' alleged need for bath or shower facilities: "Why do they need to wash so often? All they have to do is put on fresh underwear every morning.")

In general, the idea was to justify, motivate, even sublimate a boring, lonely (yes, in spite of all those traveling-salesman jokes), ill-paid task. The emphasis was on the theme of service, and with a smile: a salesman without a smile was like a soldier out of uniform. The sales force was contributing to larger social goals, serving the community "by introducing high quality goods and by acting as conduits for advances in science and technology." The good salesman was a professional: he learned about his products, kept standardized records, made standardized reports, kept his own little books of buyers and purchases that could be updated in the evenings or on Sundays (hotel radio and TV must have revolutionized the experience and character of itinerant marketing). He used initiative, but never forgot he was part of a bigger whole: "Don't forget you are a part of the organization just as much as the bass drum is part of the orchestra—likewise, don't forget that bass drum solos are rather monotonous." Companies would encourage this sense of belonging by holding regular and irregular get-togethers where the salesmen could exchange information, hear didactic and encouraging addresses, sing songs, and refresh themselves for the road. If all of this reminds one of Japanese rah-rah methods today, that's just one more thing to ponder.

Zunz's use of middle- and lower-level records, including the kind of correspondence that deals with personal matters, raises intriguing methodological issues. Here is Horace Middleton, ten years of experience as a Du Pont salesman and relative of one of the top execs in the Company, denouncing his boss Mr. Howard as a drunkard. So Du Pont puts a detective on the case, to see whether the accusations are founded, and is told that while Mr. Howard drinks, he does so with moderation by way of entertaining drinking customers. So Mr. Howard is told he may fire Middleton, which he does. Big exchange of letters at the highest echelons. Coleman Du Pont himself writes nine missives, and he is a busy man; he also lends Middleton the money to come to Delaware and plead his case. Mrs. Middleton writes on her husband's behalf, assuring the Company of his undivided and unconditional loyalty. To no avail. Fired is fired. Mrs. Middleton then leaves her husband, who can no longer support her and maybe no longer satisfy her, and Mr. Middleton never repays Coleman Du Pont.

In an example of documentary contagion, Zunz describes the loan as "ultimately defaulted." The reader has to imagine the effort that must have gone into collection. I read this refusal to pay as evidence that Middleton was in a poisonous sulk and was taking what small satisfaction he could from thumbing his nose. On the other side, however, the multimillionaire Coleman may also have taken comfort from such irresponsible behavior, for it confirmed the wisdom of the Company's decision—a small price for a big principle.

Now what can the historian do with this? The story is necessarily incomplete and leaves pertinent questions unanswered. Why did Mr. Middleton engage in such a hazardous undertaking? Was he relying on his connections to higher authority? Did Mr. Howard really drink too much but cease and desist, at least in public, once he knew that Big Brother was watching? Was he tipped off? Did he pay off the detective agency? and so on. For Zunz, the lesson is "the extent to which a large corporation controlled middle-level employees." That may be true, but I would put it differently. For me, and perhaps for jobless and wifeless Horace Middleton, the most important lesson is that authority and hierarchy take precedence over justice; or maybe that there is no justice when weak meets strong; whereas from the Howard viewpoint, the lesson was that headquarters is wiser than the pawns in the field. All history is incomplete, and we must fill it out as best we can. But documentation is particularly, frustratingly incomplete at the micro level, where we have to read the minds and hearts of individuals; and there the competence and role of the historian yield to those of the novelist.

There is a difference of sensibilities here. Chandler has no problem with bigness, which he sees as technologically dictated. Nor with the traditional qualms about bigness: Chandler is part of the canon, he is the heart of the canon, and he has neither time nor inclination for more than a century of romantic nostalgia about the loss of Eden. Unlike, say, Michael Piore and Charles Sabel, the bards of "small is beautiful," he does not yearn to regain the blissful seat. Facts are facts. Scale and scope are the accompaniment of modernity; they drive the system, and woe to those who lag.

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Zunz, on the other hand, is concerned precisely with social consequences, among other things with the pains and penalties of bigness. He harks back to Arthur Miller and C. Wright Mills and takes as his epigraph a letter from William James in 1899:

> The bigger the unit you deal with, the hollower, the more brutal, the more mendacious is the life displayed. So I am against all big organizations as such, national ones first and foremost; against all big successes and big results; and in favor of the eternal forces of truth which always work in the individual and immediately unsuccessful way, underdogs always, till history comes, after they are long dead, and puts them on the top.

Till history comes: we have here two very different perspectives of the same phenomenon. They are both true, and we need them both.

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California Dreaming

BY THOMAS R. EDWARDS

Traffic and Laughter by Ted Mooney

(Knopf, 400 pp., $19.95)

Ted Mooney's novel begins in Los Angeles, with Sylvia Walters, a young, newly divorced celebrity disk jockey, hastily packing up her belongings as a major brush fire threatens her canyon house. It ends in Capetown, at the far edge of quite a different continent, with Sylvia witnessing an even more menacing kind of conflagration. In between lies a remarkably complex, inventive, and entertaining novel about how we live now, or try to. "It turns out LA is a creature from another planet, slowly taking over the earth," Sylvia remarks early in the story. But this is not to be just another novelistic put-down of Southern California. Mooney has a sharp sense of the rather affectless life amid irrelevant comforts that "Los Angeles" so often means to those who don't live there themselves, but there's much more on his mind than crushed-car sculpture, mechanical pool cleaners that keep working after the swimmers' houses burn down, or automatic sprinklers that drench people and lawns impartially. Whatever is taking over the earth is presumably even bigger and stranger than LA, and Mooney's sense of what it may be gets worked out in intricate, lovingly global detail.

Sylvia's life is full of danger. Caught up in a moment of spontaneous erotic compulsion, she frantically makes love with Michael Bonner, a friend who's a movie special-effects director, as the brush fire approaches, escaping death only because a traffic helicopter from her radio station arrives just in time to interrupt her *Liebestod*. But she senses other dangers, too. Her car's tires have mysteriously been slashed; someone calls and hangs up without speaking whenever her call-in record show is on the air; a man in a green sedan seems to be shadowing her around town.

Her father, a top-level American diplomat, phones her from somewhere in Europe to ask if she and her sister (in New York) are all right, hinting that his concern relates to some world-shaking secret negotiations that certain elements in his own government may want to disrupt. When she acquires a new friend, Nomanzi Lolombela, a TV actress from the southern African state of Azania, she learns that Nomanzi's father is involved in those same negotiations, and that Nomanzi herself has more to worry about than the normal animosity of white South Africa (which really controls Azania) toward politically active blacks with media visibility.

From the start, Mooney himself seems to be negotiating, as diplomatically as possible, between several established fictional genres. Will this be a satire of contemporary American culture? A melodrama of desire under the palms? A geopolitical thriller? A philosophical allegory? The answer is yes, all those and more. No literary mood here is protected from the competition of other moods, and readers who like to know in advance what they're supposed to do with a new book may feel puzzled for a while. But I would urge them to

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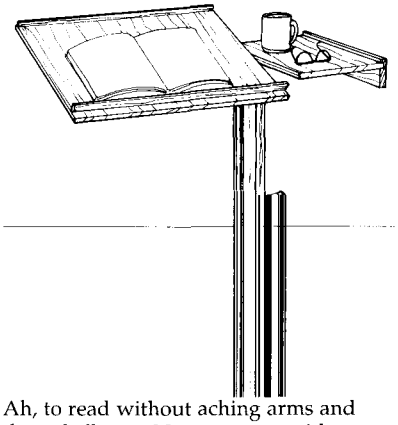

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persevere; nice surprises are coming.

The most intriguing surprise is learning just what Paul Walters, Joseph Lolombela, and their peers are negotiating about. Mooney's depicted world is very like ours, full of television and movies, computers, answering machines, car washes, shopping malls, and injustice. But there's one big difference. In his otherwise realistic, up-to-date world, Mooney takes a step backward: nuclear weapons have not yet made an appearance. In the late 1980s American science has just worked out and covertly revealed the practical possibility of an atomic bomb, and the nations must decide how to proceed. Is the thing an American hoax, an attempt to intimidate rival powers? Is it an honest theory that won't work in practice? If it does work, will it ignite the atmosphere and kill everybody? Should it be tested, and where? If not, is it better to keep it secret, or publicize it as an instrument of world peace-keeping? Who then (getting down to the real business) should control that instrument?

History as we know it, of course, must be revised to fit such a case. Sylvia Walters's world cannot, for instance, accommodate certain movies familiar to us—*Dr. Strangelove* and *Hiroshima Mon Amour* can only be the titles of Canadian low-budget documentaries that no one in Hollywood has seen. Jargon like "nuclear family" and song lyrics like "Now we have a change reaction, / One thing leads to another . . . / State of the heart, / No change apart; / The masses are critical, brother" have no special resonance. The U.S. dime bears the portrait not of Roosevelt but of MacArthur, to commemorate our winning of World War II with a bloody invasion of Japan in November 1945. Postwar Germany has always been a loose confederation of two republics; America has fought "recent foreign wars," but in Iran, Afghanistan, Hungary, and Cuba; Paris's major airport is named "Henri Pétain." As if to console us for such losses, Joyce is said to have written another novel after *Finnegans Wake*, the "vivid, erotic, and loving" *A Simple Tail*.

But Mooney's is not really the sci-fi game of Alternative Worlds. The striking thing is how little such an elision of history would alter the details and tones of personal existence. Sylvia and her friends (and enemies) have everything important that we have, even the angst we can so plausibly blame on imminent nuclear holocaust but that may owe quite as much to our being, like Sylvia, so crushingly overinformed. Viewing personal experience as media events turns life into self-conscious acting, a plight for which movies and TV, the growth industries of Southern California, are now most commonly responsible.

Virtually all the important characters in *Traffic and Laughter* are performers by vocation: Sylvia the DJ, Michael the special-effects artist, Nomanzi the soap-opera star, Petra König the film producer, Nomanzi's brother the rock musician. Sylvia's uncle, who ambiguously menaces and protects them all, is a CIA agent, a professional impersonator. And diplomacy itself is curiously like movie making, as the wily German negotiator Bloch (who's also Petra König's lover) suggests:

> "We shoot our movies in many scenes, each scene in many takes. There is a shooting schedule and, if you will, a kind of budget." Bloch looked at Walters to judge the extent of his attention, then continued. "We reshoot each scene until we have a take that, within the parameters of budget and schedule, seems the best we are likely to get. We report our progress regularly to our backers. Most important, we shoot our movie not in the sequence it will ultimately be viewed but in the sequence most congenial to its making."

Bloch is trying to talk Walters into accepting a new "location" for a putative bomb test, not in the American desert but in black Azania, to attribute a "more substantive" sovereignty to a "rhetorical" nation that as yet exists only as hopeful p.r. for a racist South Africa that wants to claim it has met black aspirations. But as a European, Bloch has less altruistic reasons for not wanting such a weapon solely in American hands, and his glance at Walters shows him seeking new persuasive leverage from terms that profess to expose or even discredit the truthfulness of diplomatic persuasion.

Language that behaves like this affords no finality of meaning, no glimpse of a bottom of truth on which pretense is intelligibly founded. And the diplomat's problem is also the problem that faces Mooney's reader. The book now and again seems to offer the pseudo-certitudes, and the real pleasures, of various kinds of popular fiction. But the certitudes are then taken back in the offer of a more demanding pleasure, that of keeping up with the writer's intricate pretending. Near the end, where in a story of international conspiracy and intrigue we would expect to learn where the bottom lies, Bloch admits to Walters that in his elusive bargaining he's made a "mistake":

> "Politically?"
>
> "No." He drew the deepest of breaths. He loosened his tie. "I have lived my life in stupidity and ambition."
>
> Walters, who had heard and said so much across so many tables in the service of his country, his family, and—it now had to be admitted—his ego, was deeply impressed. Bloch was a genius.

Invoking the credibly "human" sources of public action—stupidity, ambition, ego, or whatever—certifies nothing at all. Walters's "Bloch was a genius" admiringly insists that in human negotiations *nothing* is not performance, that incorrigible skepticism is the only response to even the most plausible show of candor.

In this novel of performative life it's the novelist whose performance is most notable. Mooney often lets his characters' talk slip into the typography of scripted dialogue, and even when seemingly "free" it remains at least vaguely responsive to some external direction:

> "I know this sounds paranoid," she said, "but I think I'm being followed."
>
> Looking her over a little harshly, he said, "Right now?"
>
> "Well, no. I don't think so. But that's what made me jump that way." She reached across the table and helped herself to some of his sturgeon. He watched it disappear into her mouth.
>
> "I wonder what I say to that," said Michael.
>
> "You could try nothing."
>
> "I don't think so."

Like diplomats, they live in a world of bottomless language, but in such a world language is all there is to go by, and they manage surprisingly well. Mooney makes sure that words sometimes confuse them—hearing "had at them" as "made of atoms" or "everything that matters" as "everything that's matter," or Michael's puzzled impression that a priest has referred (in French) to the Deity as "the godfather of Soul."

But he also represents them not as the pitiful victims or dupes of unfathomable words but as interesting, resourceful, likable people, capable of responsible sexual love, strong family affections, and serious friendship. And they're smart enough to notice, if not

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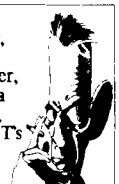

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wholly understand, the "symbolic" patterns—fire and water, flowers and diamonds, small particles and flashes of light, ghosts and mirror images, "The Mexican Hat Dance" and figures of utter stasis—that Mooney elaborately weaves into the texture of their prenuclear experience. If he knows they're not people but performers, he also knows that performers may be protected and even liberated by the roles they play, and his characters turn out to be surprisingly credible and affecting.

One could think of *Traffic and Laughter* as the working out of a joke that Sylvia hears at a film-crew party in Capetown: "If history repeats itself, once as tragedy, once as farce, what is it the third time?" Marx might have been startled by the answer—"A Petra König Production"—but it makes a certain sense. This book is neither tragedy nor farce but a fascinatingly unstable fusing of both moods, and the joke about history is enacted literally at the end, of which I'll say only that it involves the shooting, in South Africa, of *River Over the Sun*, König's historical film based on a nineteenth-century local disaster called "the infatuation of the Xhosa."

Readers of Thomas Pynchon will see that Ted Mooney has a precursor, but what writer, good or bad, doesn't? Mooney, I would say, lacks some of Pynchon's intellectual rigor and daring. If he has a "postmodern" suspicion of mimetic illusion, he can't quite suppress his sympathy for important human occasions, his yearning, at least, for fictional effects that his principles perhaps ought to forbid. I can't bring myself to regret this softness, if it has to be called that, if only because it should make his writing more accessible to more readers, and to a larger responsiveness in some other readers, than Pynchon's probably is.

But such a comparison says little about what reading such a resourceful book is like. Reading it, one is made newly aware of the serious and ludicrous relations between public representation—in politics, philosophy, or just the media—and the private areas of feeling and thought where (happily for us) most people spend most of their time. I've not yet read Mooney's first novel, *Easy Travel to Other Planets* (1981), but *Traffic and Laughter* encourages a hope that there may still be some common ground, however treacherous and uneven, between "advanced" literary art and the many intelligent readers who seldom bother with it these days.

THOMAS R. EDWARDS teaches at Rutgers and is an editor of *Raritan*.

TRB *continued from page 6*

other people their rights. If Burger King stopped advertising on "anti-Christian" TV shows (whatever those might be) because so many people refused to watch them, that would be legitimate. But the boycott was organized precisely because the objectionable shows get high ratings. It is an effort to deny people the opportunity to see TV shows they *do* want to watch. That's wrong.

It also seems wrong to punish the citizens of Arizona for not wanting a King holiday. The purpose of the holiday is to honor a great man. But you shouldn't try to ram honor down people's throats. Similarly, owner Tom Monahan's involvement in the right-to-life movement is a bad reason to boycott Domino's Pizza. Neither Monahan nor Domino's profits from his anti-abortion activism. You shouldn't use economic pressure in an attempt to discourage his purely political activities. (Corporate contributions are different. Corporations justify this use of shareholders' money as a way to improve their image. They can't complain if the image effort backfires.)

Rule 3. Labor law distinguishes between a primary and a secondary boycott. A secondary boycott is aimed at someone you have no dispute with, in an attempt to get the target to boycott your real nemesis. The distinction is harder to maintain in practice than in theory, and there are First Amendment problems in restricting anyone's right to boycott anyone. But the law discourages secondary boycotts under the general principle that there's got to be some limit. It's a good principle, which applies outside of labor disputes as well. A refusal to wear a fur coat is a primary boycott. A refusal to shop in a department store that sells fur coats is a secondary boycott. Think twice. A refusal to buy a newspaper that runs ads from a department store that sells fur coats is too much, too much.

Rule 4. Boycotting Morton salt because Morton Thiokol, the same company, makes nuclear weapons parts is not a secondary boycott, but even here there should be limits. A boycott is more compelling if it is aimed at the item that actually causes the offense. Obviously there is no convenient way to boycott nuclear weapons themselves. But it is easier to persuade people to boycott styrofoam containers than to boycott every product by companies that use styrofoam containers.

Rule 5. A boycott shouldn't be a shakedown. PUSH's attempted boycott of Nike seems little better than that. The marketing of $125 gym shoes to poor black kids is an authentic outrage. But PUSH is demanding that Nike hire black advertising agencies, put blacks on its board, and so on. It's not clear how this addresses the problem. It looks like a payoff, instead.

Any boycott is a form of blackmail. The more selfless its goal, the more appealing it will be. Whatever you think of them on the merits, right-wing boycotts over the moral tone of society and left-wing boycotts over the future of the planet are easier to swallow than the recent boycott by sports bar owners of beer companies advertising on TV networks that scramble their football broadcasts. And like it or lump it—I lump it—the most selfless political cause of recent times is the right-to-life movement.

Rule 6. Don't forget your health. A decade ago gay activists were boycotting Florida orange juice because spokeswoman Anita Bryant was an active homophobe. Now they're boycotting Marlboro cigarettes and Miller beer because the corporate parent, Philip Morris, gave $200,000 toward a repository for the papers of Jesse Helms. Clearly an improvement, healthwise.

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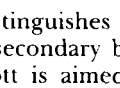

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GUATEMALA DIARIST

Poll hacks

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE PRESIdential election here, I heard speeches by the three leading contenders: Alvaro Arzú, Jorge Carpio, and Jorge Serrano. Those who complain about the narrow spectrum of American political debate should hear these guys. All said they supported the free market and wanted to cut taxes. They claimed this would increase revenues, since people might actually pay if rates were lower. The trio was much in favor of law and order, but did not answer questions about agrarian reform, civilian control over the military, or the burgeoning narcotics industry. Nobody said anything about human rights—unless you count a statement by Arzú, a former mayor of Guatemala City, who said that Carpio, a wealthy publisher advised by Roger Ailes, had violated them when he used the newspaper he owns to promote his candidacy. This in a country that within recent memory suffered thirty political killings a day.

FORTY-SEVEN OF US WERE ON hand to observe the November 11 election as guests of FUNDESA, described as a "Guatemalan development foundation." After arriving, we learned that FUNDESA was really a group of businessmen seeking to promote investment and tourism by fostering a more favorable image of Guatemala. The organization is supported in its work by the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office for Democratic Initiatives, which granted it $67,000 to cover the costs of the trip. It is probably thanks to AID that our delegation included such distinguished Latin Americanists as the chairman of the College Republicans, the chairman of the Young Republicans, and representatives of various murky right-wing think tanks. There were three liberals, counting me.

ON SUNDAY MORNING OUR FACILItators bundled us into an assortment of cars, vans, and planes. Two of us were driven to the nearby province of Chimaltanengo by a fresh fish entrepreneur, Emilio, and a young woman named Annie, who sells insurance. These two were supporting Arzú, as evidenced by a roll of bumper stickers that was hastily stashed in the glove compartment after I noticed it on the floor of their BMW.

THE ELECTION DAY ATMOSPHERE was undeniably festive. In the town of Patzún, under a brilliant sky and a smoking volcano, peasants spent the midday praying, shopping, and voting. In front of the Baroque Cathedral, a crowd gathered to hear a quack proclaim the salutary effects of a daily spoonful of shark oil. Vendors sold exotic fruits and orange juice with raw egg in it, supposed to be excellent for hangovers. The voters we interviewed had little to say. They were displeased with the outgoing president, Vinicio Cerezo, whom they held responsible for prices rising faster than wages. But few could explain why they preferred one candidate to another. Nobody mentioned fraud. But when we questioned individuals out of earshot of others, almost all said vote buying was taking place. In Tecpán, we were told Carpio's party was paying for votes. In El Tejár we heard that Arzú's was bribing voters with food and school supplies, distributed through the church.

I UNDERSTAND SPANISH WELL enough to have caught what Annie said to Emilio when we got back in the car: "A man back there said Arzú was buying votes. I didn't know whether I should have translated it." She then turned to us in the back seat and said in English, "I think that buying votes for food is much better than buying them for money." I asked Annie how common vote buying was in Guatemala. Her answer was the same as that of all those I asked: everyone does it.

WHEN WE ARRIVED BACK AT THE Supreme Electoral Headquarters at the Hotel El Dorado two hours before the polls closed, our delegation was already working on its statement. Bob Livingston, a bluff Republican representative from Louisiana, had somehow become our chairman and was summing up the prevailing consensus that the election was free and fair. I pointed out that at least two of us had heard charges of vote buying. "Vote buying isn't fraud," Livingston bellowed. "I could show you vote buying all over Louisiana." (I'm sure he could.) Unless I had hard evidence, he insisted, our report shouldn't mention it. We argued. The group's sympathies were with him. We had come to see the Guatemalan people take another brave step on their tortuous road to democracy. The director of FUNDESA said that if we included any criticism in our statement, the media would seize upon it to make the whole election appear fraudulent. We compromised. the sixth paragraph of our statement reads: "Some members of the delegation heard select charges of irregularities. At this juncture, we have no reason to believe they were of sufficient significance to interfere with the fairness and validity of the election." I think this is basically true. But had the election been largely unfair and unfree, I doubt we would have been the first to point it out. Luckily, FUNDESA wasn't the only sponsor of international observers. A smaller group, more competent and less partisan, was led by Allen Weinstein of the Center for Democracy. They were still watching the count in the hinterlands while we announced our satisfaction to the press.

BY MORNING IT WAS APPARENT that Serrano, the evangelical protestant, and Carpio, the publisher, had made it to the runoff. Our group went to have breakfast with General Efraín Ríos Montt, the most important unknown in the country's political equation. Ríos Montt led a coup d'état in 1982 and was one of Guatemala's bloodiest dictators until he was himself overthrown in 1983. He wanted to run in this year's election, and probably would have won had his candidacy not been ruled invalid under a constitutional provision prohibiting those who have participated in coups. A year ago Ríos Montt called democracy "no more than a French idiocy that's never happened." Now he calls himself a democrat. He told us that the election results were invalid because his supporters had been denied their human rights. It sounded like the pretext for another coup. The group's questions were as penetrating as ever. One of our Young Republicans asked Ríos Montt whether he would like lower tax rates. (This is sort of like asking Idi Amin about his industrial policy.) Ríos Montt has done his part to shrink Guatemala's tax base in the past. He now says that he too wants to cut taxes.

BACK IN WASHINGTON, I CHECKED to see what the papers had written about the election. On Monday *The New York Times* ran a photo on its front page of an armed guard in front of a line of voters. No one I know saw soldiers or armed police anywhere near voters; they had orders to stay away. The caption read, "Heavy Turnout in Guatemalan Elections." Inside, the story described "low voter turnout caused by widespread apathy and hopelessness." The next day's editorial was titled "Democracy Fails in Guatemala." I don't think that was the view of anyone who watched the election. To a country whose political culture is as pathological as Guatemala's, a procedurally fair election may not mean very much. But democracy hasn't failed in Guatemala. It's still waiting to be tried.

JACOB WEISBERG

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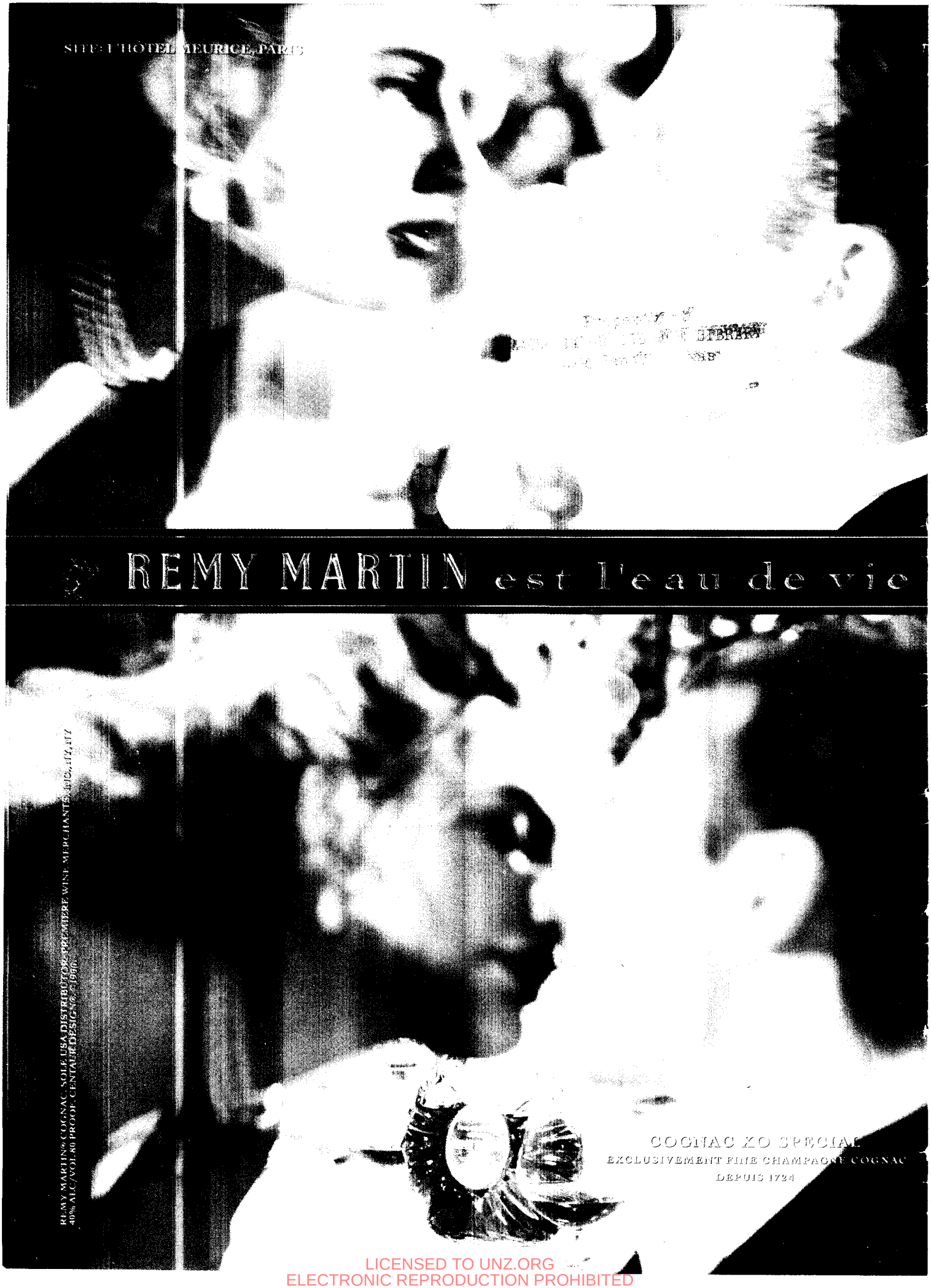
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